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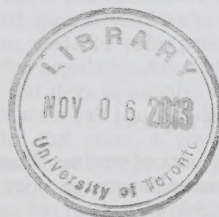
Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 29 October 2013

Mardi 29 octobre 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 29 October 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 29 octobre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À SOUTENIR LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 28, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act / Projet de loi 105, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'impôt-santé des employeurs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have questions and comments. The member from Welland. Were you standing on a point of order?

Ms. Cindy Forster: No, actually, I was standing up to start my debate here on this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have questions and comments remaining on the speech from the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. Would you like to make the two-minuter?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to speak to Bill 105, supporting small business, here today, the reason being how important small business is to each and every one of our ridings, and how we should be supporting small business because we know that small business is the heart of our community. They're the employers; they generate a strong economy in our neighbourhoods. It's so important.

I know I heard yesterday—I was debating the bill, and it sounds like all parties are supporting this bill, which is what should be done; it's the right thing to do.

We also heard comments from the Liberals that there's enough debate, let's pass this bill through—everybody agrees—but I don't take that sentiment. I'm very proud that I live in a democratic society and we are a democratic government, and that means that each one of us represents our voices in our riding, my particular one being London–Fanshawe. Each time I have an opportunity to stand up and speak and debate and comment on bills, I will, because I am bringing their voices to the House.

Therefore, to me, it doesn't matter if we speak 12 hours or 13 hours; if a member hasn't spoken to this bill, it is their right to stand here and speak on behalf of their constituents.

So I am looking forward to more debate. I'm looking forward to hearing perhaps any new comments or new suggestions or people's views from their riding. I'm happy to be here this morning and I'm looking forward to more continued debate.

Once this bill does get passed, Speaker, rest assured we're going to support this bill. We're going to do the work that we've always done in the Legislature. We're going to make this bill the best bill ever, because we want to actually make it effective and support small business so that small business can thrive in each and every one of our neighbourhoods, and we can enjoy the benefits of shopping local. We're here to support local business and small businesses in our area.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Milloy: I was here last night and had an opportunity to hear the member's speech. I'm going to echo, actually, what my colleague from the NDP just said. As a number of us had stated in our speeches, it's time to move on with this bill.

I think the statistic that I quoted yesterday—and obviously it has grown since then—is that if you include the two-minute responses, over 50 members have spoken to this bill. There have been hours and hours of debate, and I would like to address head-on this myth that by saying a bill should move forward we're somehow stifling debate. When one reads the order papers of this Legislature or looks at the Legislative Assembly Act, it is predicated on the fact that there is usually, and I'll give the number, about six and a half hours of debate that is allowed for a bill. After that point, a government can move time allocation. There are opportunities in the standing orders for closure, where someone can come up and say, "Look, the debate has reached its natural course and it's time to move on."

The crocodile tears, particularly from the NDP, bring me back to a very, very important debate in this Legislature that was taking place about one of our colleagues, the former Minister of Energy, when we had many speakers on this side of the House who wanted to speak in defence of him and the NDP stood up with the Conservatives and voted for closure so that they could stifle democracy. It's a little much for that member and her colleagues to stand up when we've just had hour after hour of debate, dozens and dozens of speakers. Everyone

agrees with this bill. Let us pass it, move on to the next stage and allow for further consideration of it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I was here when the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengary made very clear, as representative, the support that our side has for small business. I should make it clear that we would be supporting the bill at second reading and moving forward with amendments during committee time. Those amendments would address the real, serious issues here of the treachery that's in this bill, and that is the capping. This bill purports to give a break to small business, but what it really does, in light of other things, is put a payroll cap on it so that you don't qualify at a certain level of income, and that's probably the biggest problem with the bill. We'll probably change that.

But if you look at the other things they've done, the CFIB is constantly saying the biggest detriment to small business is the amount of red tape. Then we have the WSIB changes, where you're taxing the actual people who create jobs, who aren't on the job site. If you go on to look at the harmonization of the HST, the price for gas alone went up 13 cents overnight. Why? It was because of the harmonization of the provincial sales tax and the GST.

When you look at the tax load in Ontario, every hour or two, I think we're spending a million dollars more than we're taking in as revenue. Ontario has a serious problem. Who is supposed to be bailing us out? It's small business. They're the real job creators in Ontario. This does nothing for the Canadian Tire store in your community, for the pharmacy in your community. For these small businesses that invest their money to create their own job and jobs for 50 or 60 other people, this bill does nothing. It's about \$900 that wouldn't buy a decent newspaper advertisement for their business. All money out of their pockets, to be wasted right here in Ontario by the Liberal government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up this morning and make some comments based on the member from Stormont–Glengarry's remarks. Yesterday, he actually made some very good points. He said that when this government brings forward a piece of legislation, they sort of miss the ball a little bit. It's actually a consistent theme that we've seen. The legislation that's brought forward has huge gaps in some common sense pieces, and certainly Bill 105 needs to be made stronger.

We've adopted a different strategy: We're going to get it to committee, but we're going to have a fulsome debate about it. We see that as our responsibility. It's interesting that my colleague the member from Kitchener Centre always says, "It's passing strange." I'd never heard this saying before I sat in this House.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: No, "passing strange." There's another one: "Be that as it may." But it's passing strange

that he's complaining that we're continuing to debate on this, because prior to the Monty Hall, Let's Make a Deal deal with the Conservatives on Bill 74, the piece about the Liberals sort of dragging out every little piece of legislation because they didn't have anything new or innovative to bring forward—that's what you were doing prior to the Let's Make a Deal moment.

Ms. Cindy Forster: That was our bill.
0910

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes. So now we have something on calories in restaurants. These are not ideas that are going to strengthen or boost the economy. If you follow through on some of the ideas that we brought forward, however, on youth employment, the home care piece—let's put that into action. Let's address auto insurance. That's what our commitment is. We sat down with you throughout the budget process. We're going to make sure you do what you said you'd do, and we're going to have a fulsome debate on Bill 105 because that's our job.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. I enjoyed the comments from the member from London–Fanshawe, the Minister of Government Services, the member from Durham and the member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

The member from London–Fanshawe talked about being proud to exercise her democratic right. We share that belief on this side. I see from the Minister of Government Services that they're hearing but they're not listening. I think she was very clear that she wanted this debate and she thought it was important, whereas he took something else from that same comment. It's hard to believe, but I think we see that so much in this government, because small business is crying out for help, and you look at the taxes that this government has raised on them over the years, doubling them. As was mentioned yesterday, soon the only small businesses we'll have left here are the ones that can't afford to move; they really can't move because they service the direct public. Anybody who has the option of leaving this province to gain some of the benefits from our neighbours' low energy rates and low taxes is doing so.

Recently, the Canadian government was working on a deal with Europe. That certainly allows us to sell our goods over there, but it also allows our businesses to leave and work over there if it's a more appropriate place to produce profits and ship them back to us. We have to be careful. The world is a competitive forum now, where people can work where they want, move where they want, choose where they feel the best benefits are.

We no longer have what's considered the best health care in this country. We've let other provinces take that banner away from us. Unfortunately, we're spiralling to the bottom, and I think we need a change in government so that we can make that change and come back to where we can be. Ontario has great potential, and we want to make sure we release that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm here today to speak about Bill 105, a good bill. While this bill is going to address a very small issue for small business in this province—and we need to know that there are hundreds of thousands of small businesses in this province that we could be helping in many other ways—I'm probably going to spend more time addressing the shortcomings of the bill than I am the positives of the bill.

But first I want to address the comments from the government House leader this morning, the point of him being critical, actually, of our member from London—Fanshawe for wanting to actually debate in this House. I think that's really what we were elected to do and that our constituents want to hear from us. That is really the only opportunity they get to see us debating issues that are important to them. So if we want to stand up here and speak for 25 hours, and the standing orders allow it, then we have the right to do that.

I also wanted to comment on the questions being asked in the House this week on points of order by the official opposition because they are not getting the questions answered that they're putting on the order paper.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Actually, they have all been answered. Look at your order paper; they've all been answered.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Well, maybe today they are, but they weren't last week.

So I think those are the important issues. It doesn't seem the government wants to speak to this issue, but certainly they didn't hesitate to put together seven or eight bills along with Bill 74. We spent a lot of time talking about Bill 74 in the last two or three weeks, and that's a bill that really is important to only one big business: EllisDon. So why is EllisDon more important than the hundreds of thousands of little businesses in this province that are counting on us to do the right thing for them, to help them be able to grow the economy and their business, to help them be able to hire some new employees, to help them to perhaps buy some new equipment and innovate themselves?

Bill 74 is going to be before us here today for a vote, but, you know, it's interesting how that all happened. The government actually used EllisDon's StrategyCorp to lobby the PCs to bring forward a private member's bill for this one big multi-billion dollar company in the province. They have billions of profits each year, and so they lobbied the Tories to put that bill forward.

Then we heard from the Premier on a number of occasions that this was just a little anomaly—this labour relations agreement between the trades and EllisDon was just an anomaly in the province—and that the government had to do the right thing and they needed to get rid of this for this one big business, when they really should have been spending time on making things better for all the small businesses in this province.

So then there was a court decision, and the court decision ended up kind of reversing the need to actually move forward with Bill 74, and so the Premier said at that time—

Interjections.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm actually talking about the differences between supporting big business and the lack of doing things for small businesses, so I think I am speaking to the bill.

What happened was then we had the Premier saying that she no longer needed to support it because the issue had actually been addressed and there was no immediate need to do that.

Then there was a vote to actually get that into committee. We went to committee, the bill got debated in committee, and there were days of hearings. We heard from all kinds of people on the bill. We heard from the union side; we heard from businesses' side. But we were still hearing from the Premier and all kinds of newspaper reports that she actually wasn't going to be supporting Bill 74. Anyway, when it got down to the clause-by-clause and it got down to the voting, we all assumed that the Liberals weren't going to support it and that it was going to die. Lo and behold, they sat on their hands and they abstained, actually, from even going anywhere near that bill, although it was their idea in the beginning to actually get that bill on the floor of this House.

So, today after question period, we're going to be actually talking—

Interjections.

Ms. Cindy Forster: That you guys started. So at the end of the day, we're going to be having that vote. It will be interesting to see how many people are actually here and how they're going to vote on Bill 74.

I'll now go back to Bill 105 and some of the shortcomings. For me, some of the shortcomings of the bill are that there are other taxes in place, like the input tax credit, that will see big business actually have tax write-offs for entertaining their clients, for buying wine at dinner, for taking them to a Raptors game or to a hockey game. You know, the average Joe, the average small business, probably doesn't have the funds to be able to even entertain their clients. There are many small home businesses in this province that operate with one or two employees. There are some that operate with 10 or 20, and there are some that operate with 100 employees, but these input tax credits are going to apply to those biggest corporations, those corporations that earn billions of dollars of year-end profits.

The Royal Bank actually went out and laid off all of their backroom employees and hired temporary or permanent foreign workers. Speaker, I took the opportunity to pick up the phone and speak to the VP in my area when that happened. Here we are putting Ontario workers out of work and we're hiring temporary or permanent foreign workers to do the jobs that should belong to the people in this province. It's Ontarians and Canadians who support our banks throughout this country. We're the ones who pay them \$300 and \$500 a year to keep a bank account open, we're the ones who invest our money in the banks, and yet all of our jobs in the backrooms of these banks are going to foreign workers, and it's not right.

0920

Why should banks and insurance companies and multi-billion dollar corporations be getting more tax credits to support them when in fact we're doing very little in this bill to actually support small businesses? I talked to some small business people in my area, and although they look forward to having that extra room, that extra \$60,000 or \$50,000, to them it means very little. It might give them \$25,000 or \$30,000 a year, so maybe they'll be able to hire one employee or maybe they'll be able to provide two part-time jobs because of that little bit of savings, depending on how big their company is. So while this bill does address some issues, it's very small.

Now, we're going to be supporting it because we support small business. They're a big driver in our economy here in the province, considering the loss of manufacturing jobs: 600,000 jobs have been lost in the province over the last 10 years. I can tell you that my community of Welland is still reeling from that. I would say that over the last 20 years we've probably lost 10,000 jobs in the south Niagara region.

It takes a lot more than a bill with a nice title like this and a relatively small tax exemption to actually create more jobs in this province. That's why during the 2011 election, in our platform, we brought forward a pretty comprehensive plan about how to assist small and medium-sized businesses with tax incentives and tax grants that would assist them. It would create real full-time jobs. It would do that by ensuring that companies had tax exemptions to invest in machinery, to invest in innovation and to train workers in this province.

I look forward to the comments from the other sides of the House and I look forward to further debate in committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I've had the chance, over the course of a number of days, to hear speakers from both opposition parties stand up in this House and talk about how much they support not only the bill, but they want to support small business. Yet we find ourselves in a bizarre world where, notwithstanding the fact that they seem to suggest they want the bill to move forward and they want to support it and, most importantly, they want to support small businesses right across Ontario, we continue to have hours and hours and hours of debate on this bill.

As we've said on this side of the House, what's most important at this point is to get this bill to committee so we can have additional analysis, additional discussion, bring it back for third reading and get it passed so we in fact on this side of the House can do what the two opposition parties claim they want to do, which is to support small business. The most important thing here is that we get action, move this forward, stop what I think is a filibuster in this case anyway, because of the extensive goings-on on the other side of the House.

It's important that we support this bill, get it to committee and get it back here for third reading so that small

businesses right across the province of Ontario can realize the benefits of what will take place because of what's in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen to the genuine concerns of the member from Welland. I know that she is very representative of her riding, a very committed constituency person and heavily tied to their leader, Andrea Horwath. I would say that those are good things.

I'm somewhat disappointed in the response from the Liberal Party, the member from Vaughan particularly, more or less trivializing any of the comments made by anyone. Their plan, really, is to get it out of here, get it into committee and stifle debate and the very democratic process here in this House.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Now they're laughing, see? This is the thing. We have members that haven't spoken and want the privilege of speaking on behalf of their constituents. I can't wait for the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex, who I'm sure will deliver a very thoughtful message from his riding, probably even talking about small business, not the diplomatic arguments happening in this House.

I think it's small and trivial the way you're commenting on the member from Welland's remarks. If you wouldn't do her the courtesy of listening to her, I think you are doing a disservice to your party yourself. When you're here in this House, listen as much as you are speaking. I think the member from Welland made some very good points, trying to represent the importance—at the end of this day, small business in Ontario creates all of the jobs. I worked for a large company. In Ontario today, here's how you create small business—the member from Vaughan should listen to this. In Ontario, how do you create a small business? You start with a large one and you tax it and tax it and tax it until it either moves or, as has been said, they have no option but to stay here in Ontario and try to survive under the Wynne government. Their policy on energy is just one example of penalizing business in Ontario today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments? The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I want to say that my fellow NDP member from Welland gave a very thoughtful speech. In particular, I was very impressed with two points. One is that she drew attention to the fact that the Liberal government had to be shamed into answering questions that should have been answered months and months ago. So what has been perhaps suggested to be a filibuster in fact was democracy at work: the fact that the Conservative caucus had to raise this issue in the House to ensure the Liberal government did their duty, which was answering questions that were months and months overdue.

What I particularly also think was very important, and the member from Welland expressed it very well, was the fact that the members in this House have not only an

opportunity but an obligation and a duty to represent the concerns of their constituents by voicing their constituents' issues and their frustrations in this House. That's exactly what we're here to do. So any suggestion or accusation that using that time is in any way deterring from what goes on in this House is simply unjust and wrong.

The member from Welland is discharging her duties by speaking, as are all the other members in this House. It's the only way that the people of our communities can have their voices and their concerns expressed here in the House. So I applaud all the members for taking the time to express their concerns and their issues. You're doing the duty of this House and you are doing democracy justice. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments? The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. I want to say that I always enjoy what the member from Welland has to say. I think she is a thoughtful contributor to the debate in this place and I admire her tenacity and her passion. I just want to say thanks for the thoughtful contribution that she did make.

On the issue of small business itself, I used to operate a small—in fact, it was a small business that became a big business, or a bigger business. We were going in the right direction. At the time, the province was being run by the party opposite. I owned and operated the original Chapters bookstore, and we had some interesting times. I really enjoyed the bookstore business.

We had some interesting encounters with government. I remember the year that my business was randomly selected for both a GST and a PST audit. That was fun. You could convince me that government at that time did nothing but get in the way of small business. I paid my accountant about eight grand to come in and work through my books, and when it was all done, the provincial government owed me about \$800.

0930

I remember being in touch with the minister from the party opposite about that and about where I get my rebate from, and the response I got was that it's just the cost of doing business. I was a little embarrassed by that, but it taught me some important lessons about standing in solidarity, not just with my brothers and sisters in the labour movement, but also with all our good friends in the small—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to thank the members from Vaughan, Durham and Bramalea–Gore–Malton, and the Minister of Community and Social Services, who was actually listening to me, which is great. It's rare that that happens in this place.

With respect to the comments about filibustering, I have to tell you that I am following members of this House who are hard acts to follow: the honourable Peter Kormos, for 23 years, who could filibuster everybody in this place, as long and with great interest and intensity—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Including his own party.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Including his own party. Prior to that, Mel Swart was the member. Mel was the man of props; in fact, the anti-prop legislation came into place, as the Minister of the Environment will tell you, because Mel had a lot of props. Both were beloved men in my community. So if you think I'm filibustering, I'm going to have to get a lot better at it.

There are standing orders in this House. There are standing orders that allow you to debate; there are standing orders that allow you to avoid debate or to delay debate. People can ring bells, they can ask for recesses or they can debate the bill. I think it's a better use of all of our time and certainly constituents' tax dollars for us to be debating the issue, whether we're directly debating Bill 105 or whether we're highlighting for constituents in our community other things that we may not necessarily agree with. So that's what I chose to do with my 10 minutes today, but I was still talking about business in this province and the need for jobs in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 105, also known as the Supporting Small Businesses Act. I really feel that there is something we can all agree on here, and that's that every party in the House will say that they support small business. But what will Bill 105 actually do for the struggling small business owners? The bill proposes to increase the exemption amount from \$400,000 to \$450,000 for the 2014 to 2018 calendar years, with the amount to be adjusted for inflation starting in 2019.

But please excuse the small business owners from my riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex, as they're not about to pop any champagne. They are too busy trying to keep the lights on or keeping up with the mountains of paperwork of new regulations, or struggling to remember all the new fees they have to pay, thanks to this Liberal government.

In Chatham–Kent–Essex, we have lost over 10,000 manufacturing jobs since 2003—coincidentally the same year that this government came into power. Job losses were massive, and it's a massive problem for the people in my community. This single change, while welcome, doesn't go far enough to help the small businesses.

What will this bill do to help Mike Lenover of Lenovers Meats pay for his skyrocketing hydro bills? Mike's father, Keith, started Lenovers Meats in Chatham back in 1938. The local business has weathered many storms. They've stayed profitable through a world war and recessions but are having a tough time doing business under the Liberal government. Mike's energy bill is almost equal to his payroll. He's now bracing for yet another increase to his hydro rates on November 1. These increases can be traced back to the Liberals' billion-dollar gas plant scandals, as the Auditor General confirmed that these costs will be added to the rate-payers' already massive hydro bills. From 2011 to 2013, this man in my riding, his business, Lenovers Meats, has been paying more than—he has seen his rates increase by

45% more per kilowatt hour, and the global adjustment rate alone has increased by 117%. Let's not try to cripple small business. Mike's rising electricity bills do not support his small business.

Another question is, what will Bill 105 do for small business owners who are forced to pay for inadequate WSIB coverage in addition to the private insurance they already have? I went to talk to a particular business owner, Varco Industrial Sales, in Chatham. The owner and the manager of the Chatham store, Jon Varey, was explaining to me that he has his own insurance, but that's not enough. He now has to pay additional WSIB for himself as well as for his employees. It's killing small business. This particular company, by the way, offers a wide variety of industrial products, including everything from machinery to janitorial supplies.

Another question: What will Bill 105 do to reduce the burden brought on by the College of Trades tax? The College of Trades will drive up the cost of a host of services, including anything from getting a haircut to having a car serviced, or even a home renovation. The Ontario College of Trades is imposing a variety of new annual memberships, yet offer no benefit or say in how the college is run. For some tradespeople, these fees represent a 500% increase.

Speaker, as I was coming into my seat, I looked up behind me and there were a number of tradespeople here, unionized tradespeople. I'm sure that they have a number of tickets and I'm sure that they're also paying a whole lot more for their tickets today than they were last year.

Here are just a few examples of some of the annual increases: apprentices, tradespersons and journeyperson candidates are now paying \$60 a year; journeypersons are now paying \$120 a year; employers and sponsors, another \$120—and, of course, keep in mind that on top of all of these increases in fees, there is HST being applied to it. So what the HST was being paid for before, now it's a tax on a tax, and to me, that doesn't make any sense. Also, some of the trades workers previously paid \$60 for three years. Now they pay \$120 every year. That's a 500% increase in their fees. That's not fair for these people behind me or anyone else involved in the trades.

You talk about hairdressers. Now they're paying \$120 a year to the College of Trades. I remember I was talking with a barber in my riding. He came up to me and he said, "Rick, you're not going to believe what happened. I'm in my barber shop, I have some customers in my barber shop, and these people from the College of Trades came in." I call them the trades cops. They came in and actually embarrassed him while he was in the middle of giving a haircut. I wouldn't have wanted to have been the next person in the chair, that's for sure.

Another question is, what will Bill 105 do to support small businesses looking to hire on more apprentices? Our government should be doing everything it can to make it easier for qualified young Ontarians to enter the skilled trades. Many businesses provide an opportunity for new tradespeople to learn their craft. My colleague

the member from Simcoe North tabled a bill which sought to modernize Ontario's antiquated apprenticeship system and create over 200,000 new jobs in this province by reducing the ratio of journeymen to apprentices to 1 to 1. The Liberals and the NDP voted against that bill. Yes, the propped-up coalition is still alive and well. They say one thing, but they do the opposite. Trust me, Speaker, this is not in the best interests of people looking for work and not in the best interests of small business.

Before the bill was up for a second reading, I talked to some other local businesses about the issue. One constituent I spoke to was Brian Wright of Wright's Electric in Chatham. Wright's Electric has been in my city for a good long time—64 years, as a matter of fact. They employ 13 people at the moment. They know the community and they know the industry.

When I asked him for his opinion on getting the apprenticeship ratios down to 1 to 1, he told me, "Rick, that's a very impressive idea." He told me that there are people in our community who could get jobs if this regulation was changed. Further, he said that if the legislation remained the same, these same people would not get a chance at a job. Brian finished our chat by saying, "The people in the industry want this. It's what's good for job creation, it's good for students and it's good for the public." Sadly, the Liberal government was not listening to the needs of small businesses and students desperately looking to find work.

Now, these are just a few examples of the hurting small businesses in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex. I'm sure that every member in this House can tell you similar stories from worried business owners in their own ridings. Yet we see a Liberal government that is so incredibly out of touch with the reality that the people of Ontario live in that they can actually parade this bill as if it were going to really save small businesses. Given all of the issues in the Chatham-Kent-Essex area that our people are facing, not to mention businesses across the province, how can we treat this bill as a real solution? One light piece of legislation does not fix this government's disastrous approach to job creation.

0940

I have met with countless small business owners all over my riding. I've heard the same thing over and over again in Chatham, Wheatley, Blenheim, Highgate, Ridgetown, Erieau, Tilbury and Leamington: They can no longer afford to do business under this Liberal government. They also cannot afford to wait. Many business owners in my riding operate month to month just trying to pay the bills, let alone make a profit or hire folks in the community. They need a sense of hope now. These small business owners cannot wait around yet another year to hear from another panel or have another study group which will tell Premier Wynne what her ideas for job creation are. They need action today. For the sake of the small business owners of Chatham-Kent-Essex and all of the constituents who depend on these people for employment or to enrich our community, I truly hope this government has an actual plan to create jobs in Ontario. My constituents cannot wait any longer.

If this Liberal government doesn't have a plan to truly help small businesses across the province, get out of the way, because the PCs will step up to the plate and help these struggling owners and their employees. We'll free small businesses from the tax and the red tape burden that this government has placed upon them so that they can stay in business, prosper and create good, honest jobs that the people of Chatham-Kent-Essex are ready to fill. Everyone in this House, if they really get behind their small business owners in their own ridings, will realize, will see, will understand that these people are the driving force for our economy today. They provide true solid jobs.

Why do we punish the small businesses? It's not right. It's not the right thing to play on them and create unnecessary burdens. I say we need to get this bill passed, get it into committee where then we can amend it to death.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to thank the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills—it's one of those long titles—

Ms. Laurie Scott: No, no.

Ms. Cindy Forster: No? From—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Chatham-Kent-Essex.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Oh, Chatham-Kent-Essex. I'm sorry. I'm not the Speaker so I don't have to learn all of those places.

I want to thank him for his comments. I want to zone in, though, on just a couple of the issues he brought in. On the trades ratio: Personally, I don't think that it's the business of the government to actually interfere in issues of staff to staff, in any sector. I can tell you that from my experience in nursing at the hospital; we were constantly, over the years, fighting about ratios. We knew that the more registered staff there are, the lower the mortality rate with patients. I think that with the College of Trades, probably the higher the number of tradesmen, the lower the health and safety issues that occur and a better quality of work is produced. I think that's something that trades and employers need to deal with themselves. They need to negotiate those kinds of issues in their own terms. It isn't something that the government can legislate. So I think we need to stay away from that.

We need to stay away from always being on the attack of unions and workers in this province in areas like the Rand formula that has been around for as long as I've been around, and really stick with trying to help employers—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I've got to tell you, it takes some gall sometimes to make some of the statements that you hear opposite. By the way, I could listen to the member from Welland all day. I think, again, you're speaking very sensibly. Thank you.

This business about the college being a tax: It's not a tax; the government is not getting any money out of that at all, as anybody who follows the issue knows. I've got

to tell you, I'd much rather have our friends, our tradespeople in the labour movement, handling labour issues and apprenticeship ratios and all of that than I would government handling it, just as I'd rather have teachers and doctors and dentists sorting out the difficulties with education, medicine and good oral health care.

I'm proud of my beloved city of Hamilton and Mohawk College, which graduates more apprentices than any other institution in the province. I'm not anxious at all to join the race to the bottom that the party opposite would have with its anti-labour, freedom-to-work, Minnesota-type legislation. That's not my idea of a fun or progressive, helpful, vibrant and caring Ontario.

The member opposite says he's going to amend this bill to death. I don't doubt that for a minute. There will be as much time wasted as possible from a party that didn't even read the budget before they decided publicly that they'd vote against it. It's bizarre.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments? The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker, for this opportunity to speak. I must say it was also interesting to hear of a party that was going to vote in favour of a budget before ever reading it, so it does cut both ways.

This bill also is merely tinkering at the edges. It doesn't approach the serious topic of the trouble that our small business and medium- and large-size businesses are in. I'm still chuckling over the member from Durham's statement about: How do you have a small business in Ontario? You start with a large business. That's so true under this government for the last 10 years.

This tinkers at the edges. It doesn't hit the core problems. The core problems are some of the new taxes that the Liberal government has put on small business: the WSIB tax and the College of Trades tax. In the remaining one minute that I have, let me just tell you about the College of Trades. I have spoken about the barber from a small town in my riding before. He sent a letter in, and he asked me—I can't use his name and I can't use the town he's in because he's the only barber in that town and he's worried that the College of Trades will know it was him. What had happened was, here he was, cutting the hair of one of his clients in the chair, and two members from the College of Trades, with their shiny car parked outside and the uniforms they wear, came in to insist on seeing his certification that he had paid his \$100 and change. They interrupted his business for almost 10 minutes, he said, and frightened the customer that was in his chair.

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: He was; he felt threatened by the whole series of actions.

This is the problem in Ontario. This Bill 105 is not going to do anything to solve the real problems of the WSIB tax and the College of Trades tax. In fact, it's taxing medium businesses to pay for this—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I was listening intently to the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex as he went through

some of the issues that are contained within this bill. I think it's incumbent upon all of us to actually, when it does get to committee, try to strengthen it. That's certainly our intention.

He talked at length about creating good jobs, and yet two budget cycles have come and gone, and his party, his caucus, have missed significant opportunities to do something about creating good jobs. They have some white papers. I think they have the white paper called the right to work. It embraces some sort of theory about right to work. The way that we see it, it's a right to work for less money, less benefits, in less safe conditions. So just because you call the paper bold does not make it so.

0950

We of course have adopted a completely different philosophy. In both budget sessions we did something very unique. We read the budget first before we said whether or not we would support it; we read it at length. Both budgets needed significant work, which we brought to the table in I think a very constructive way. We were able to bring some innovative and creative ideas, especially around youth employment, which is an issue that affects every single riding. Every single member in this House has a serious youth unemployment issue, because Ontario has one of the highest rates of youth unemployment in the country. For 10 years we have seen not a lot of action, but we were able to make the Liberals do what they said they were going to do a long time ago. We're happy to do that; we're happy to work with them, because the people of this province sent a minority government to this House. They expect us to get the job done.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Chatham–Kent–Essex has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, I would like to thank the member from Welland, the Minister for Community and Social Services, my colleague and friend from Nipissing, as well as the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for their comments, some rather enlightening, some rather incorrect and disturbing.

The discussion about PC white papers—they're ideas. At least we have ideas; at least we put them out there. If they want to chew them up and spit them out, that's OK. They can make accusations all they want. At least we have a plan. I have yet to see a plan from the third party opposition. They just want to comment. It's easy to ride on the coattails of the government right now; we can see that the coalition is definitely alive and well, and they support it.

A comment was made earlier that it's unfortunate—we seem to come forth with bills, true bills that will in fact help get Ontario back on the right track, yet unfortunately these good, solid bills do get defeated by both the Liberals and the NDP, which tells me one thing: They speak out of one side of their mouth here and the other side of their mouth there. I don't think it's really fair that they can make these comments.

They also try to pit us against the unions, and that's a very unfair comment, very unfair. I've worked in a

unionized environment in the past. I have some very good friends who are unionized employees. What we're talking about here is job creation, be it union or non-union. We're talking about job creation. We're talking about maybe their sons and daughters who don't have a job right now and want to enter the trades, but they can't enter the trades because the ratios are too high. We want to be able to help these young people get jobs in this province, and lowering those apprenticeship ratios we know will in effect create over 200,000 jobs, and we're for them as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak about small businesses in Ontario. We just had Small Business Week last week. This is Bill 105 this morning. The Liberal government says it's supporting small businesses. Well, it amends the Employer Health Tax Act by increasing the exemption amount from \$400,000 to \$450,000, effective in 2014. Really, we're going to support that, but it's a minor change that may get a business, I don't know, maybe \$900 or so that might help them. The Liberal government, I have to say, for 10 years has been very good at titling bills that pretend to actually be doing things. Bill 105 is the Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013. Well, it may give them maybe \$900 on this hand, but the government has taken away far more on the other hand. Bill 105 kind of exemplifies what this government has been doing. It's kind of one of those shell games, right?

Let's talk about the number one thing I hear about in my constituency of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, and that is the cost of hydro and how it's so much harder to do business in the province of Ontario. The hydro rates, we all know, have more than doubled under this government. They're going to continue to double. There are credit cards out there now called the Ontario Taxpayers' Trust citing cancelled power plants, \$1 billion; Green Energy Act, \$7 billion; annual debt service costs, \$10 billion; new debt since 2003, \$120 billion. What does it say at the bottom of it? "Stopping this Liberal government: priceless."

The people of Ontario are bleeding out dollars. Their electricity rates have gone up—there's a global adjustment fee now on their bills—trying to pay for the failed policies of this government, specifically the Green Energy Act and that \$1.1-billion power plant scandal that's been going on. So you bet that small businesses are paying extra, thousands and thousands of dollars out the door, just on their hydro bills alone.

Now, small businesses are the greatest job creators we have in the province of Ontario. At least 85% of the jobs in Ontario are created through small businesses; it certainly happens in my riding. They're pretty darned nervous—I've told that story many times—and they said, "Why would you set up a business in the province of Ontario?" It has become more difficult, and they are crying out for help, and as someone has said, too, they're losing their entrepreneurial spirit. So when bills like 105

come in—okay, happy day—it gives them a little bit, but really, the shell game continues. They're losing more and more money out. It's a cash grab.

We even have the Auditor General confirming the fact that the problem with the Green Energy Act is we pay the richest subsidy, and they pay all these wind producers whenever their power is made. The Auditor General tells us that one of the flaws in the whole Green Energy Act is there is no business plan done.

Again, we see pieces of legislation come out—no real business plan. We have made motions—I just forget the name, but anyway, we've cleared the deck of the bills that the government thought were a priority, so we could see what their fiscal plan is.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Programming motion.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes, a programming motion—thank you—to see what their fiscal plan is. So we've played that. We're waiting patiently to hear what the fiscal plan is, because the province is in a crisis. We lost 300,000 good manufacturing jobs. We have 600,000 people out of a job. I'm pleading: In my area, I need jobs. People need to be able to pay their bills, to feed their families. It is just absurd, the fact that in reality, not only are the businesses struggling, but people are leaving their homes because they can't pay their bills, and they are quietly doing so, because they are proud people.

My colleague from Simcoe North has been a great advocate of apprenticeship ratios. I know we've spoken about that several times this morning. I have small businesses. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities was in my riding the other day, saying how great the College of Trades is going to be, and I had a small business person come up at the Lindsay Rotary luncheon and say, "I can't get enough people who want to be electricians, because I can't get through that ratio." He's a small business guy who's trying to survive, trying to provide skilled trade jobs. The minister responsible for colleges and training is going to save us all? Well, it is not going to save us all. It is not going to help our kids enter into the skilled trades, where there actually are jobs and we're facing a deficit of finding people to fill those jobs. The College of Trades is not going to be your saviour. The member from Simcoe North has brought motions upon motions and bills up, to try and change that.

I just want to say that, you know, they say the tradespeople want it. Some 88% of tradespeople employees say they are against it.

Actually, the College of Trades is going to cost \$84 million, and where are they going to get that money from? Oh, yes, those businesses—

Interjection: Small business.

Ms. Laurie Scott: You bet. Small businesses are paying for this.

We've just heard, you know, the police who are out there, the tax police, fighting with the barbers with customers in their chairs, looking for their money. "Where is your licence? Is it posted on the wall?"

This is not helping small businesses. This is another tax upon them. Quebec is the model, apparently, that it

has been modelled after, and that's disastrous. I mean, you'll need 11 people to renovate your bathroom, and it will take you probably 10 months. The handyman is gone.

The home builders all across my riding have been decreeing how awful this is. I applaud the member from Simcoe North for all his work in that area, because I want young people in my area to have jobs.

There's another big thing that they could be helping about. I'd mentioned and touched upon the wind turbines being forced, of course, on unwilling communities. Just last week, I brought up in the Legislature the Cham Shan Temple, that had 20 years ago purchased this piece of property, a \$40-million investment that they want for four simple temple sites. They're an industry that could come here for tourism in this community, and that is being threatened by industrial wind turbines being built close to all of the four proposed temple sites—a tragedy, certainly not something that's helping job creation in the area.

1000

I'm looking forward to the government having a look at that a little closer and, hopefully, working with not just this community, but all the communities that are not willing hosts for industrial wind turbines.

Horse racing: Again, Kawartha Downs was a great horse racing track. It moved from 100 races a year to 20. That's not enough for industry to survive. Jobs have already been lost. I mean, that's not job creation.

We have little Bill 105 that gives businesses maybe \$900 a year. It is a shell game because the government continues to shut down our small businesses, making it harder to work in the province of Ontario.

On another topic, I want to speak on the WSIB bill, Bill 119. We have fought that and fought that, and that is just another burden on employers. It's not necessary. We've said we would repeal Bill 119. We hear that continuously out there, even from Mennonite and Amish people. Just the whole principle of Bill 119 and the WSIB is against their culture, it's against their beliefs. The government has turned a blind eye to them, and that's just not right. They are a peace-loving people who add to our communities. We could have done better for them.

I want to touch a little bit upon eco fees also for my agriculture community especially, the Ontario Tire Stewardship program. We saw on the news yesterday that Drive Clean scenario where the tests aren't quite accurate, but the customer, the taxpayer, has to pay again, even though the machines for the new Drive Clean tests aren't working. It's time to scrap that program of Drive Clean. Again, we're just burdening taxpayers with something that doesn't need to exist any longer. Its day is done. It was never to go past about 10 years. The member from Kitchener-Conestoga, Michael Harris, has done a great job at trying to bring that to the forefront. Let me tell you, that's a hot topic back in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock: the uselessness of the Drive Clean program at this point with the new vehicles that have come

on. This is not helping the environment. It's all about a tax grab for the Liberal government to pay for their inept policies that have burdened us for 10 years.

The tire tax: We have lots of petitions about that—the fees increasing from \$15.29 to \$352. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings told a great story the other day when he spoke about this bill, about how there's a \$2,000 difference, I think, going across the border to buy tires. We can't be competitive. The province needs to be competitive with other jurisdictions, and it just isn't.

My time is coming to an end on Bill 105. We here have put out great ideas to help small businesses; we want them to succeed. They are the job creators. Bill 105: great title, minimal amount of help. The bigger picture needs to be addressed in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It's a pleasure to rise. I want to build on the last point from the member's speech, that it's the name of the bill. I think that's what is causing a lot of people concern. If the bill was "getting rid of the employer health tax credit" or getting rid of that exemption, then people would say, "Okay, this bill is doing exactly what it says." The problem with the bill is, when you give it a name like "Supporting Small Businesses" and you look at the bill, and there's nothing of substance, really, beyond a minimal exemption which is increased—and that's certainly going to help in a small way, but the problem with the bill is it's "Supporting Small Businesses." We expect a lot more in terms of actually creating a climate that supports small businesses.

While I may disagree on some of the strategies the member is suggesting, the member is actually raising some good points here, like the fact that if we want to create an environment where our small businesses are promoted, are supported, and we can encourage their growth, then we need to do more than just provide this additional \$50,000 exemption. That's not something that in a significant, meaningful, dramatic or innovative way supports our small businesses. It simply doesn't do that. We need to see more concerted efforts, a broader approach to create a significant and powerful impact and really support our small businesses in a meaningful way so that we can actually create a climate here in Ontario that allows our small businesses to flourish.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments? The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me to speak on this very important issue.

I heard the speech from the member opposite quite diligently, and I'd like to emphasize once in a while in this House that we should rely on facts when we are talking about issues of great public interest. So here are some facts, because the member opposite spent a lot of time talking about taxes in this province. The fact is that this government has done a lot when it comes to reducing taxes and making our businesses more competitive.

Here are some specific examples, which cannot be denied by the members opposite. We harmonized the

sales tax, by amalgamating the GST and PST; that resulted in creating a lot of efficiencies in our sales tax system, especially for small businesses. We also eliminated the capital tax in the province of Ontario, which corporations paid whether or not they had a profit. This government did that. We also significantly reduced corporate taxes, both for large businesses and small businesses in the province of Ontario. How much for small businesses, since that's what we are talking about here? We took the corporate tax rate for small businesses from 5.5% to 4.5% and, also, we totally eliminated the small business deduction surtax, from 4.25% to 0%.

Now here is another fact: The party opposite, the opposition party, voted against every single one of these measures. So they stand up here and they talk about how they are the champions for businesses, but every single measure that was brought in to boost businesses, to promote businesses by making it a competitive climate, they voted against them. I would be totally fine with everything they're accusing us of, if they just admitted to the facts before this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: To the Minister of Labour, here is another fact for you: When you came into power in 2003, the debt was \$125 billion. The debt today, just a short 10 years later, has now risen to about \$275 billion. That too, sir, is a fact.

We talk about this bill being called the Supporting Small Businesses Act. It probably should be renamed the Killing Small Businesses Act, of course, because of the fact of what it's doing with the College of Trades and all the red tape that's involved. Killing small businesses as well as the rising hydro bills. These are some of the things that I have spoken about when I had my 10 minutes to address this particular bill.

The other thing is, and my colleague had mentioned it earlier, the Green Energy Act. Well, the truth be known about the Green Energy Act, this is an act that does—if we can get rid of it, that would be great, but if not, let's rename it. We'll call it the Black Energy Act, instead of the Green Energy Act, because this Liberal government is putting Ontario into a deep black hole. That's what that Green Energy Act is doing right now. It's killing businesses down in my riding right now. It's nothing but turbines. I've got turbines popping up in the great riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex faster than you can say, "NDP–Liberal coalition." That's how fast they are popping up down there, and they are destroying everything down there.

We look at positive ways of how to, in fact, support small businesses, because I've mentioned it before and I'll say it again: Small businesses drive the economy in Ontario, and they need all the breaks they can get in order to survive, for job creation and so that they can keep this economy rolling.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm glad to make my comments on this. I did want to point out the comment I

just heard—I don't like to say those words because it doesn't ring true to why I'm here. I'm not here to have a coalition with any government. I am here to speak on behalf of the residents of London-Fanshawe and bring a voice to this Legislature.

In October 2011, all residents of Ontario spoke to this Legislature and voted in a minority government. That means they want the parties to work together. I think we heard that very loud and clear, because we made suggestions to budgets that actually got results for people, that actually made life better for people.

So when I hear the comment about the coalition, absolutely I don't agree with that. When you talk about coalitions and trying to make things better for people, look at Bill 74, the EllisDon bill. Who are they trying to make life better for? EllisDon. EllisDon has reported revenues of \$3 billion a year, but we have families struggling in Ontario to pay their hydro bills and put food on the table.

Supporting small business is what's important here today. Because we all agree on this bill does not mean we have a coalition; it means we actually see that this bill, though it's a very small change for small business, is going to benefit small business and get results for people. So I'm happy to stand here today, Speaker, and debate and put my comments forward, but I do not like the word "coalition." It is getting results for our constituents who sent us here in a minority government. Roll up your sleeves, and let's work together to make sure people's lives reflect the bills that we pass in this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'll wrap up before question period, so I'll probably be a little quieter than what question period is about to be.

I appreciate the comments from the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, the Minister of Labour, the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex and the member from London-Fanshawe. She might not like the word "coalition," but they certainly unified together to help wipe out the horse racing industry in the province of Ontario. So you might not want to call it a coalition.

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: That transition funding is not saving the horse tracks. I just told you the story about Kawartha Downs. It went from 200 races to 20. It doesn't produce an industry.

You propped up this Liberal government and took the legs out from under the horse racing industry and can take full responsibility for that. You might not want to call it a coalition, but that's exactly what happened.

The industrial wind turbines being forced on communities: Again, the NDP don't really say that isn't true. They have done that, and they still are forcing them on communities. I just told you about the job losses that are going to occur when they do that in my community to the Cham Shan Temple, the loss of those potential jobs there.

The Minister of Labour—I mean, really—saying what the Liberal government has done: Let me see. Unemploy-

ment has risen dramatically under this Liberal government. You can't deny those figures; they are out there. I'm not making them up. The debt and deficit have doubled, and guess what? Servicing that is the third-largest budget item in this province. You do not have the ability to pay for health care and education and social services when you're busy paying down this huge debt and deficit that this Liberal government has created. When they said they streamlined HST and GST, sure they did: They put it on home heating and electricity and put people and businesses out of business.

Mr. Todd Smith: Shame.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It is shameful.

Anyway, Bill 105 is a minor step and really doesn't solve the problem.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

WEARING OF PINS

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear daffodil pins in recognition of the Canadian Cancer Society's MPP education day here at Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. MacCharles is seeking unanimous consent to wear the daffodil pin. Before I seek agreement: a reminder that poppies are to be worn on the left side of your breast and that it be the highest—if you choose to wear the daffodils, they are to be underneath.

Ms. MacCharles has asked for unanimous consent. Do we agree? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'd like to welcome, from the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors, in the west section here, Mark Scholz, who is the president, and Don Pack, the VP of operations of Precision Drilling. Welcome today.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm not sure he's here, but I think Henry Vertolli from my riding of Pickering-Scarborough East and other members from the sheet metal workers' international union, Local 30, are here today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm honoured to introduce today, from EllisDon, Tom Howell, and also, from the Carpenters' Union today, Mike Yorke and Carlos Pimentel.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: I'm pleased to introduce a former student of mine, Tim Butler, who is the business manager for the IBEW in Sudbury. Welcome, Tim.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd also like to introduce a good friend to members here at Queen's Park: Les Liversidge. Thank you, Les, for coming today.

Hon. John Milloy: We have a large group from my riding who are here to visit page Kathleen Strathdee, known as Kate. We have Kathleen's parents, Mike and Carolyn Strathdee; her sister, Ella Strathdee; her grandmother, Diane Furtney; her aunt, Gloria Strathdee; her cousin, Rachel Strathdee; a Strathdee family friend and an exchange student from Austria, Jakob Allmer; her uncle, Al Strathdee, who was a page here in 1979; her cousin, William Strathdee; and Mike and Linda Dehaan, who are their host family in Toronto. We welcome them here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a quorum.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have visitors today, and I'm really pleased to introduce them. They are Cathy Burns from the Canadian Cancer Society's Sudbury chapter, as well as Suzanne Pellerin from my riding, who does tremendous volunteer work for the cancer society. Welcome to Queen's Park.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Ça me fait plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue aujourd'hui à M. Carol Jolin, président de l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens. Son association représente presque 10 000 membres et plusieurs, plusieurs écoles en Ontario. Alors, bienvenue Carol.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to introduce and welcome today James St. John, business manager, Central Ontario Building Trades; Greg Mitchell, business manager, United Association Sprinkler Fitters Local 853; Jim Hogarth, business manager, Ontario Pipe Trades Council; and Peter Reed, business representative, Central Ontario Building Trades.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: In addition to Tom Howell and Mike Yorke, I want to welcome John Grimshaw and Tim Fenton.

From Ottawa, I want to welcome Marcel Lapensee, Floyd Cuning, John Harrison, Georges Lessard, Brian Massey and Richard Hayter. Welcome to your Queen's Park.

Mr. Todd Smith: I would like to welcome Amy Stinson to Queen's Park. Amy has been a co-op placement student from FNTI on the Tyendinaga Mohawk territory, and she has been volunteering in my office for the last couple of weeks as a member there. So welcome to Amy.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to welcome this morning Isabella Rodas, who is actually in the west members' gallery. Isabella is a grade 11 student who is joining us today from Big Brothers Big Sisters to learn how Queen's Park works, so we should all behave.

Most recently Isabella was on Parliament Hill, so welcome to Isabella. With her is Lauren Ramey—she was on Parliament Hill before; now she's at Queen's Park. Also welcome Lauren Ramey, my press secretary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I noticed up in the public gallery that the Green Party of Ontario leader, Mike Schreiner, who's also the candidate for the Greens in Guelph, is here today. Hello, Mike.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to welcome the consul general of Turkey, Mr. Ali Riza Güney, on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the Turkish republic,

and the delegation from the Turkish community in the members' gallery up there: Mr. Huseyin Nurgel, president of the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations; Mr. Ismail Vataner, president of the Turkish Federation Community Foundation; Mehmet Okem, president of the Fenerbahce Canada association; Umit Eruysal, president of the Turkish Culture and Folklore Society of Canada; and Cavat Zerrin, president of the Azerbaijani community association of Canada. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Unbeknownst to me, we've got, sitting up in the gallery there, an old friend of mine from plumbers and fitters local 628 in Thunder Bay, Terry Webb. I welcome him to the Legislature.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We are very proud to have a page from Toronto Centre, Louis Frank. His mom, Naomi, his dad, Steve, and his sister, Ella, join us here in the gallery today. I'd like to welcome them.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased to introduce my legislative intern for this session, Vanessa Dupuis, in the west gallery, from the great riding of Richmond Hill.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want to welcome a good friend of many people in the Legislature today: Mr. Robert Simpson, the president of HopeLink International, here in the members' gallery, of course. HopeLink International does great skills development upgrade work in many countries, including Canada. Welcome, Robert. It's good to see you.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I'd like to welcome to the members' gallery here my legislative intern—my new legislative intern—Lauren Millar, and also my legislative assistant, Andrea Ernesaks. They both do an outstanding job in my office.

ORAL QUESTIONS

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question, I guess, today is to the Deputy Premier—

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —Acting Premier; to the Acting Premier. I had to look down the whole row.

It's a good question for you, actually, because over a month ago, we worked together to clear the decks, to move aside legislation that was clogging up the system, so we could clear the way for a plan for job creation, to grow our economy and encourage investment.

That was a month ago, House leader, but unfortunately, since then, I feel the Premier has reneged on our deal. You've not brought forward any job creation initiatives, but you've brought forward new ideas, for example, to bring in labelling on McDonald's menus and a new 24/7 dispatch service for animals when you can't even run Ornge for human beings.

Minister, where is the jobs plan? How did this get on the agenda instead of what was promised to the PC caucus?

Hon. John Milloy: I think our record speaks for itself when it comes to job creation in this province—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will go straight for the individual: The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, come to order. Thank you.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: Ontario has created 475,600 new jobs since the recession, meaning we've recovered 179% of the jobs created compared to the USA at 78% and the UK at 127%. We could talk about our comprehensive youth jobs strategy, which is already allowing youth across this province to access the types of experience they need so that they can find jobs.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, I want to focus on one piece of legislation that's before the Legislature right now—Bill 105, which would lower taxes for small business—and ask the Leader of the Opposition why his party continues to delay the passage of that bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.
1040

Mr. Tim Hudak: The minister says that the record speaks for itself, precisely making the point that I am. Minister, yesterday the finance minister stood up and said that the Ontario economy is slowing, that we need to once again lower our expectations. If I hear that, that tells me that you're doing something wrong, not more of the same.

Let me give you some examples. You promised that the Green Energy Act would create 50,000 new jobs. Well—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Wrong.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —you're wrong. I ask you: Where are those jobs?

You promised the HST would create 600,000 more jobs.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Wrong.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You're wrong. I ask you: Where are those jobs?

I'm proud the PC caucus has brought forward a comprehensive plan to make Ontario number one in job creation, number one in investment, not in the back of the pack. I'll ask you again: You sat there at the cabinet table, Minister. Why did you move to the front of the line the menu at McDonald's and an animal welfare 24/7 line instead of creating jobs for men and women in the province of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Hon. John Milloy: I know the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment will want to comment on this, but let's play a little bit of compare and contrast. Let's look at the so-called PC white papers. Do you know what they would do? They would result in the firing of 10,000 education workers. They would result in the firing of 2,000 health care workers. They would drive down wages in this province with their harmful right-to-work-for-less legislation.

We found out on the transit front that the Leader of the Opposition's back-of-the-envelope plan—which Mayor

Hazel McCallion came out swinging against this morning, by the way—would result in the cancellation of transit plans across this region, which in turn would lead to lower economic growth and also affect infrastructure. We have a plan, not like the half-baked plan that the Leader of the Opposition puts forward, which would only result in job losses in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, again, I've asked where the jobs plan is. I thought we had a deal, and you've reneged on this deal. You've not brought forward any new ideas to create jobs. I don't understand why you're putting forward these other initiatives instead of helping people in manufacturing get good jobs so they can put bread on the table for their families. We've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs.

Your finance minister has said that growth is actually slowing in the province of Ontario. I don't know about you, but I'm tired of Ontario falling behind. I'm tired of young men and young women having to leave this province to go to Saskatchewan and Alberta to get a good job. I'm tired of businesses leaping over Ontario to go to the States or other provinces to open up. I want to see this in Ontario.

We have a plan. We're ready to put it out there. We can turn this province around. What's wrong with you? Where is your plan? Bring it forward. Will we actually see it on November 7, or are you kicking this down the road once again?

Hon. John Milloy: The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It's unfortunate that the leader of the official opposition continues to talk down Ontario's economy. While he does that, over here on this side we are creating jobs. As was referenced already, nearly 500,000 jobs have been created since the bottom of the recession, and 95% of those jobs are full-time jobs. About 80% of them are in the private sector, as well.

We created a new trade strategy just a few weeks ago that we released; I guess the official opposition wasn't listening to that or our new social enterprise strategy that's going to be creating thousands of jobs. As well, our youth jobs strategy—\$295 million over the next two years, which is estimated to create at least 30,000 jobs.

We've been working hard on this side. In fact, when you think of our Eastern Ontario and Southwestern Ontario Development Funds, they created and retained more than 22,000 jobs. We've contributed as a government—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —leveraged almost a billion dollars from the private sector.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Acting Premier today. I guess I'll make this point again: The economic development and trade minister rhymes off all kinds of govern-

ment spending programs financed by higher taxes on families and businesses. I'd argue that you've tried that for 10 years. Our growth rate is slowing. We're at the back of the pack in job creation. Isn't it time to try another plan?

Let me tell you another impact of the Liberal mismanagement of our economy. Today is actually the four-year anniversary date of our credit downgrade. Under the Liberals of Kathleen Wynne, we've had three consecutive credit rating downgrades. I'm proud to say that under a PC government, we actually had nine credit improvements and upgrades in the province of Ontario. I'd contrast that any day.

Let me ask you, now that we're at the four-year anniversary of our credit rating downgrade, what have you actually done to get us an upgrade? Why aren't we moving forward, instead of falling further and further backward, in our great province?

Hon. John Milloy: When we came to office, we inherited a secret \$5.6-billion deficit. That member sat around the cabinet table and allowed the Magna budget to come forward with that hidden deficit—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North, come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Thunder Bay, I'm trying to do something here. Thank you.

The member from Simcoe North will come to order.
Finish.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we cleaned up that deficit, and during the recession we invested significantly, as did every government across this country, including their cousins in Ottawa, indeed every government across the world. We are, right now, in the fourth year of seeing that deficit being reduced in a responsible fashion and not engaging in the slashing and burning that is the hallmark—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I had hoped, on a very serious issue, we would get a more serious response from the House leader. This is the four-year anniversary of the third—no, the original; we've had three credit rating downgrades under the Liberals.

Let me tell you why this is important. It's just like your credit score. The worse rating you have, the more difficult it is to borrow, to finance a mortgage, to get a car. That means, in the province of Ontario, we're paying more in debt interest, which means less money for doctors or for nurses. I'd rather see us invest in priorities like health care than send it to our overseas lenders—a very straightforward point.

Can we expect, Minister, in the economic statement that you announced for November 7, a comprehensive plan to actually reduce spending and improve Ontario's credit score, or are we just going to get more of the same?

Hon. John Milloy: When it comes to program spending, let me share some of the stats here. With program spending, we now have an annual rate of less than 1% on average, which we're projecting forward between now and 2017-18. We're continuing to move forward with 60% of the Drummond recommendations this year. We are transforming public services for better results.

We have brought down the deficit year after year in a responsible way. We haven't engaged in the type of slashing and burning that has been the hallmark of the PC Party. I've read those white papers, and they scare me. They are shades of what Mike Harris and the Leader of the Opposition did to this province.

We need a responsible way. We need to get the deficit under control, but we are going to do it in a way that rejects what happened in the past.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, again, I'll stress, Minister, four years on, the credit rating remains downgraded. There is no hope for an upgrade. That's not the case in Alberta or British Columbia where they've maintained AAA credit ratings. Saskatchewan has had an upgrade. You say you blame the international crisis. Well, while other provinces have actually moved forward, Ontario is falling further and further behind.

I know that your caucus is in a bit of a dispute; you want to kick up the balanced budget date farther past 2018. At least those caucus members are being honest because you have no plan to balance the books. But you know what? I say that's not good enough.

We've put a plan on the table that will actually get spending under control to balance our books, to pay down debt. That's what we need for economic growth.

I'll ask you one time, because I assume that you've been at the cabinet table and you've had a preview. Please don't tell us on November 7 that you're going to kick this can down the road even more. We can't afford it. I want jobs in Ontario not going out of Ontario.

Will you at least implement our plan if you have no clue on how to get the books back to balance?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Acting Premier.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we have seen their plan before and it involves selling Highway 407 at bargain basement prices. The fact of the matter is that governments around the world invested significantly and, yes, drove up deficits during a time of recession, one of the worse recessions to hit the western world since the 1930s. We are in the process of reducing the deficit. We are doing it in a balanced way; we are not engaging in the slashing and burning of the opposition. We are holding government spending tight. We are restraining wages, and we are finding ways to work together to make sure that we reach that target of 2017-18 in a responsible way. The honourable member will hear more on November 7.

1050

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Families and businesses paying some of the highest electricity rates in Canada are tired of getting hit with the cost of electricity decisions that are being made behind closed doors. Is the Liberal government ready to take some simple, concrete steps to ensure real accountability and transparency to folks who are stuck paying the bills?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I want to say first of all that when we took over government there was a deficit in electricity infrastructure. We've invested \$21 billion in generation. We've invested \$10 billion in new transmission and upgraded transmission. We have converted 25% coal generation, which they created, to zero coal generation in the province.

In the meantime, we have taken some very positive steps which the NDP has voted against in terms of mitigating electricity prices, including the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, which provides a 10% discount to families and small businessmen and farmers; the energy and property tax credit; and the Northern Ontario Energy Credit. They voted against every single one of them, every single price mitigation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, people are tired of seeing this government sign electricity contracts and make electricity decisions without any concern for the people who are stuck paying the bills. We know the government wasted over a billion dollars on cancelled private power deals in Oakville and Mississauga. The Auditor General was able to get us some answers on that, but we still don't know how much money the government spent signing contracts for nuclear power plants that they just finished scrapping. The government says it spent \$180 million, but all we know is that the game around here tends to be, how high can we go?

What we want to know is if the government, if this minister, will provide some transparency and tell the auditor to actually review the books on the cancelled plans.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the third party references our decision to defer new nuclear and the costs that may have been incurred in preparation for that. First of all, deferring new nuclear was the right decision. It has received support across the province. It is going to save us an investment of \$15 billion in the system which otherwise would be creating new power which we don't need because we created a surplus situation.

The \$180 million that she's referring to has been invested in environmental approvals, project planning, and public and stakeholder consultations around the new build. It has enabled us to obtain a 10-year licence to build new nuclear, should we decide to move in that direction under our new long-term energy plan. We've

been responsible, Mr. Speaker, and the \$15 billion not being spent in new nuclear will mitigate rate increases, which is exactly the point that she's taking about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, people deserve some basic answers on the sky-high cost of electricity, and all they get from their government is evasion and excuses. New Democrats have asked the Premier to appear at the justice committee to explain new revelations by the auditor that she signed off on an arbitration which the auditor said favoured a private power company and drove up costs for Ontarians. The Premier said she won't come this Thursday.

Can the minister tell us when the Premier will actually walk the walk on transparency and come to the gas plant committee to answer questions about her role in the arbitration agreement specifically highlighted by the auditor?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has been very open and transparent. She's been to committee. She has taken very significant initiatives on transparency, disclosing documents and going to the committee.

What the people of Ontario want to know is, what is the NDP policy on energy? What is your policy on renewables? What is your policy on wind? What is your policy on refurbishment of the units?

More particularly, Mr. Speaker, what she is really, really upset about is the fact that we have been inundated by her supporters for our decision on deferring new nuclear. We have hundreds, if not thousands, of congratulations and thank yous. We're stealing her thunder, and she won't talk about the deferral of new nuclear.

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is actually to the Acting Premier. I want to ask a question about another issue that's hitting household budgets pretty hard these days.

Drivers in Ontario are paying some of the highest auto insurance in the country and the government is letting those rates continue to climb in Ontario. Rates aren't going anywhere but up for drivers. Does the Acting Premier think it's fair that drivers are forced to pay the cost of testing and retesting their cars now, even when their cars are meeting all appropriate emissions standards?

Hon. John Milloy: In terms of auto insurance, we've been very, very clear. We brought forward a plan; it was a well-thought-out plan which involves co-operation with the industry, where we plan to see auto insurance premiums reduced by an average of 15% over the next two years. These changes build on our existing plan, the plans that have been in place. We have set out benchmarks—the Minister of Finance has reported on this to the Legislature—that we will see over the coming months as we see auto insurance rates reduced here in the province of Ontario.

It is a plan that is, as I say, based upon consultation with the industry. It has a number of elements. Over time,

we are going to achieve real results for the drivers here in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The point of the Drive Clean program was to reduce smog and air pollution, but the program is failing more new cars that produce less smog and failing fewer older cars that are producing more smog, and forcing drivers to pay for retesting even when the problem is with the testing equipment, not the car.

This is a program that isn't producing results and is making life more expensive for Ontarians. Does the Acting Premier think that's fair?

Hon. John Milloy: The Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would have expected that those who would be opposed to this program environmentally would be asking this question. I must say, I'm surprised that the leader of the New Democratic Party is asking this specific question.

She would know, for instance, that the Ontario Medical Association believes that this program is an excellent program, that the Ontario Lung Association believes it is essential, and that the asthma association believes it's essential. Gideon Forman, executive director of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, says: "Programs like Drive Clean—which reduce smog components and poisons such as carbon monoxide—are very important to public health. Our doctors believe that, far from being eliminated, these programs should be strengthened," and that's precisely what is happening.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, I think the minister avoided the question about whether or not the program is actually effective in terms of the testing, which was the question.

People feel like they're being squeezed in tough financial times. The government promised that auto insurance rates would come down, but of course, the government keeps dragging its feet and people keep seeing increases. The government is giving a billion-dollar HST break to corporations, and every day people are being told they'll be getting a bill for new taxes and new tolls that will cost \$1,000 a year.

The government told people that Drive Clean would be revenue-neutral and it would make sure we would reduce smog in our air, but it's failing clean cars and passing dirty cars, and people are wondering what the heck they're paying for.

Does the Acting Premier think this program is actually working?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Once again, I must express—I know the New Democratic Party is going through a bit of a change here where they want to take on the populist stance or the consumer stance—I understand that—at the sacrifice of the environmental programs that we have in place.

Many of the Auditor General's suggestions, for instance, for program improvement are captured in the recent program changes. She would know that there are

33 jurisdictions, I believe, in North America that have exactly the same program. It is a more precise test. It is a better test that's identifying problems.

I'm really, really surprised that the New Democratic Party—and I know their critics must be cringing at hearing this—is taking this particular stance on a program that is reducing dramatically—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

1100

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games. Minister, Ontarians have a right to know how much the Pan Am Games are going to cost them. We were all led to believe by the bid book that the total cost for the Pan Am Games would be about \$1.4 billion—with other partners, as you continue to point out. But the issue is that the Ontario Liberal government has tacked on an extra \$1.1 billion in costs. What is that, a magic Liberal scandal number? Pan Am projects like the athletes' village, the air-rail link, the hidden secretariat money, the Pan Am trail, not including security and transportation—they're all outside the original budget.

Minister, what is the total cost of the Pan Am Games? Do you have a number, and if not, why not?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question. Speaker, I thought later on tonight, I would be having a more detailed debate with the honourable member, but that was cancelled for tonight. I wonder why it was cancelled.

Anyhow, my ministry is working hard on two pieces at the moment: One is the transportation; the other one is the security. The transportation is a complex file. The footprint is quite large; it involves 10,000 square kilometres and 14 local governments. At the moment, some of our current planning priorities include establishing a safe and reliable route network for athletes and officials, strategies to handle an influx of spectators, an integrated signing plan and other ways to ensure successful games transportation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Minister, it is a complex file, and that's why it's disturbing that you don't have a grip on it. We would love an answer to these simple questions. What is the cost to Ontarians? The stock answer that you've been giving is going to become even more embarrassing once we get the documents for the estimates on November 19. It's not just your doublespeak, Minister, that's the problem; it's that you are giving away more of our—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Withdraw, please.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Withdrawn, Speaker.

It's that you are giving away more of our money as a bonus to executives for a false budget. You budget is two years out of date and severely flawed. But despite your smoke and mirrors, we have confirmed at least an

additional \$1.1 billion for Pan Am. Minister, you continue to misinform the public about the total cost—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Okay. Withdrawn.

You refuse to answer to transportation costs and think the sky is the limit on security. Minister, you are not accountable. Will you step down today and let someone—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Minister.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question. The member is the king of the creation of nonsense numbers. He is the king of fabrication of stories that undermine the Pan and Parapan American Games. Speaker, the member opposite wants to cut the ties with 41 countries. He wants to take away the 26,000 jobs we're going to create. He wants to destroy the capital projects we have built so far. He wants to dampen the spirits of the competitors. He wants to demolish all the legacy of the Pan and Parapan American Games, and that's not good.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Rural Affairs. The Premier charges that the Slots at Racetracks Program was not accountable, but she is the one who is keeping racetrack audits top secret. Not-for-profit track operators like the Fort Erie Race Track have opened their books because they have nothing to hide. Now they are the ones getting cut out of the Liberal plan because of their honesty.

When will the Premier make the audits public so that we can see how much for-profit giants like Woodbine spent on bonuses, perks, reserves and executive compensation?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Our goal is to have a sustainable horse racing industry in the province of Ontario. Our government has a plan, a plan to invest in people and infrastructure and support an innovative, dynamic environment where business can succeed. That's why we created a new \$400-million five-year horse racing partnership plan under the auspices of Mr. Snobelen, Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Wilkinson. We believe that our horse racing sustainability plan will strengthen and promote live racing in the province of Ontario. It will stabilize the industry and grow both the fan base and the wagering revenues. It will also be—I emphasize—accountable and transparent and will provide a positive return on investment of public funds. The plan also calls for restructured governance in the province of Ontario. Collaboration and co-operation will be critical in moving forward a horse racing plan that's integrated with the OLG's modernization plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Back to the Minister of Rural Affairs: The Premier has a panel on horse racing and she

has a panel on openness, but she'd rather not say how much Woodbine executives paid themselves with SARP money meant for horses because this government knows how to back their own winner. It knows how to turn its back on horse people and track workers in Fort Erie and communities all across rural Ontario.

Speaker, my question is simple: Will the government come clean and make the track audits public—yes or no?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I was at Leamington last Friday. There's a positive buzz in Leamington for the future horse racing in that community.

We have recognized for over a year that the Slots at Racetracks Program was unaccountable and lacked transparency. That's why we cancelled it. The program was reviewed by Sadinsky, Drummond and our transitional panel.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member asked the question.

Hon. Jeff Leal: The previous tracks' books were reviewed by third party audits. The Auditor General is currently looking at the program. This is not an area that lacks scrutiny across the province of Ontario.

We've learned a lesson from the previous PC program, and we've set in place a new modern program that's transparent, accountable and a pathway for the future.

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Mr. Speaker, my question, through you, is also to the Minister of Rural Affairs. Ontario's small and rural communities have many unique and diverse challenges when it comes to economic development and small business growth. Currently, there are a number of programs designed to assist rural municipalities with these challenges, such as the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund and the Eastern Ontario Development Fund. Although these programs address many important priorities, there is always room to do more.

A program that was very popular in my community and in many others across Ontario was the Rural Economic Development, or RED, program. Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Rural Affairs, could the minister please update the House on what our government is doing to strengthen and diversify the economies of rural communities?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Oak Ridges—Markham for asking me that question. Just recently, I was in her community to celebrate the Markham fall fair, which was a wonderful event for that community.

Our government is committed to working with rural stakeholders to build strong, vibrant rural communities and businesses throughout Ontario. One way we're meeting this goal is through the relaunch of the Rural Economic Development program. The relaunched program is now accepting applications for the \$4.5 million that's available this fiscal year.

The RED program helps our rural municipalities, including Oak Ridges–Markham, create jobs and attract investment by promoting innovative partnerships. Since 2003, the RED program and our government have invested over \$167 million in 418 projects, generated over \$1.2 billion in economic activity and supported the creation or retention of over 35,000 jobs. Moving forward, the RED program reflects our government's renewed commitment to rural Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the minister for that answer. Constituents in my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham will be pleased to hear that our government is continuing to invest in the RED program. I know first-hand that, in the past, small businesses in my riding from the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and the township of King have benefited from both business retention and expansion projects through the RED program.

Previously, RED focused on initiatives that included downtown revitalization and food processing sector development. I'm sure my constituents and others from rural communities across the province will be interested in understanding the focus of the relaunched program.

Speaker, through you to the minister, could the minister please elaborate on what kinds of projects RED will be focused on?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member for her supplementary. The RED program is focused on those high-value, low-cost projects that create jobs and diversify economies in rural Ontario. Projects could include downtown revitalization, regional marketing and promotion, business development and diversification, and community expansion, to name a few.

I encourage all rural municipalities to take a look at the relaunched RED program to see how it could help them with their priorities. Applications are available online or by contacting my ministry directly. Rural Ontario communities deserve a real focus by this government. By renewing our commitment to the RED program, our government is supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate in all corners of the province of Ontario, working to build a successful and vibrant one Ontario.

1110

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, it has now been almost a full year since the Auditor General warned you that collecting a surplus on a revenue-neutral program like Drive Clean is an illegal tax. But instead of following the Auditor General's advice, you nearly doubled the surplus of the Drive Clean program. That's right: Under the Liberal government, Ontarians are now paying—wait for it—\$19 million in illegal Drive Clean taxes every year. This needs to be corrected now.

Minister, a simple question: Will you commit to ending this illegal tax grab today?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, I know that the Conservative Party has been attacking the program, despite the fact that when the changes are made to the program, people such as Gord Miller, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, said in his 2011-12 report, "Likewise, the Drive Clean program has undergone a number of independent program reviews that concluded significant reductions in smog-causing pollutants were being achieved, but that further reductions could result from program improvements, including the implementation of on-board diagnostics emissions testing which is currently under way," and which is conducted in over 30 jurisdictions in North America. So we are not unique in that at all.

So I'm very surprised that the member continues to attack the program, which is in fact taking 36,000 tonnes of smog out of our air every year and stopping the contribution to 2,500 premature deaths a year, according to the Ontario Medical Association.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville will come to order. Answer.

Hon. James J. Bradley: So I'm surprised that the member continues to attack a program which is improving the air quality in this province measurably.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Minister, I'll get you to put your earpiece in your ear. I'm talking about the surplus here, not about the program itself. We all know the program you brought in is not about protecting the environment; in fact, it's all about the money. The courts have ruled that you cannot make money off a revenue-neutral program, so it's not acceptable to continue to ignore the Auditor General's advice until your next budget, as was reported last night on CTV. That's like getting caught for pickpocketing and then telling the police you'll stop a few months from now.

Wrongdoing should be corrected immediately, not when the perpetrator feels like it. It's not right to make Ontarians pay illegal taxes for one more day, especially for a temporary program that is long past the expiry date.

So, Minister, will you commit to ending the illegal Drive Clean surplus and pay back the excess money collected to Ontario drivers today?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. I'm trying to get attention. Thank you. The need for an earpiece would not be necessary if the heckling stopped.

Carry on.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member would be aware, of course, that the program was in fact established by the Conservative government in 1999 and was in fact in deficit for the first decade of the program; in other words, there was a net cost to the province of Ontario for this program. Only at the end of 2011 was it concluded that it had become revenue-neutral.

By the way, I should say this, because your leader, who was a member of the cabinet, would remember this: The only raise in the cost of the fee came from—you guessed it—the Conservative Party. The Conservative government raised it from \$30 to \$35.

Now, I have asked and am working with the Minister of Finance to ensure that this program becomes, as it is designed to be, revenue-neutral, and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm disturbed by some of the heckling I'm now hearing. I'll act quickly for it to stop. New question.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. In May 2012, the Premier said, "In order for the Ring of Fire development to go forward ... in the best way possible, we know that this is a partnership: the federal government, First Nations, the provincial government and the companies working together."

Yet, just two weeks ago, Cliffs was forced to consider pulling out of the Ring of Fire because this government refuses to provide direction in Ring of Fire development. Last Friday, Northern Superior Resources was forced to sue the government for failing to play a role in consultation with First Nations. How can this government ask partners to work together while it refuses to play a role in creating a plan for mining development and job creation?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the question, and I think, as the member understands very well, we are indeed working with all our partners very, very closely. We're certainly involved in very significant and important discussions, if not negotiations, with the Matawa First Nations, something that we hope will lead us towards a much greater opportunity to work together with them as well on a number of issues that are very important.

We're working in terms of skills upgrading and skills training to have people prepared for the Ring of Fire. We're certainly also working with the federal government, as well, trying to get them to play a true partnership role, and, may I say, with the companies. We continue to work closely in a focused way with all the companies: Cliffs Natural Resources, Noront Resources and KWG Resources.

This is a complex and complicated project, one that will make such a difference to so many over so many years—a multi-generational opportunity—and, indeed, that's the opportunity that we have to work together with the work that, obviously, all of us can do here in the Legislature together.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, my question is to the minister. Minister, last week you said, "We're having discussions with all interested companies. Those discussions obviously will include important infrastructure links."

The government is announcing that thousands of jobs will come to the province, but yet no work on the ground is being done to create these jobs. There is no training of the workforce to meet the demand. There is no plan for infrastructure and there is no electricity rate reduction.

For six years, this government has talked the talk, but has done nothing on the ground to create the jobs and consult the communities. What will it take for this government to actually develop a plan for Ring of Fire development and job creation in the north?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The member could not be more wrong in almost every aspect of what he just referenced.

Certainly, in terms of the skills training and upgrading, we've provided skills training and upgrading to over 800 people. We've consulted, on a number of bases, with First Nation communities, as well as all kinds of other northern municipal leaders and on a variety of aspects as well. In terms of the companies, we recognize how important infrastructure is. That's why we are looking very closely at a variety of options.

Our obligation, and what your expectation would be, is that we make an appropriate assessment to say, "What is the best decision in terms of the role the province should be playing in terms of infrastructure?" That's exactly what we're doing, and that's why we're going to continue to work as closely as we can with Cliffs and with the other companies, with Noront and with KWG.

I think you recognize what a complex project—it's a multi-faceted project, but one that we are extremely excited about, continue to be excited about, continue to view as a real priority, and one that I will, as minister—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Constituents in my riding of Mississauga–Brampton South constantly contact me at my constituency office to find out about improvements to public transit in Mississauga and Brampton.

My constituents face the worst gridlock in the province, and can spend over one to two hours commuting to and from work. Yesterday, the mayor of Mississauga expressed her concern on the recent comments by the Leader of the Opposition on cancelling the planned LRT project in Mississauga, a project that would get residents moving. Now my constituents are worried about the future of projects in Peel. Can the minister please assure them that better transit is on the way?

1120

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member for her constant and unwavering support for the Hurontario LRT and the five rapid transit projects we have going on in Peel region right now. Mayor McCallion is quite right and has led a boom in commercial development and residential development as a result of these, and the cancellation of them would mean a major loss of jobs.

I got my hands on the Conservatives' election strategy in Peel region, and they've got a new set of slogans, Mr. Speaker. The MPP for Etobicoke–Lakeshore is going to be running on a slogan called “Down with Up”; the MPP for Durham will be running on the slogan “Slim Pickings for Pulse”; the MPP for Dufferin–Caledon is running on a slogan of “Zero for Züm”; and the MPPs for Thornhill and Newmarket–Aurora are running on the catchy slogan “Hasta la vista, Viva.”

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Thank you to the minister for the clarification. My constituents will be happy to know this government is committed to better public transit and supporting municipalities with initiatives like this.

Speaker, my constituents want to know more about the transit projects in Mississauga and Brampton and how they fit in our government's investment strategy. Can the minister tell us more on the LRT and BRT projects that are under consideration in the region of Peel?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, the official opposition not only has no jobs plan, no economic development plan; they have an anti-investment plan. Cancelling rapid transit in Kitchener, Hamilton, Mississauga, Brampton, Oshawa and Scarborough would devastate commercial investment.

It's interesting that the construction trades are here, because we're working very hard with them on apprenticeship programs and on community benefits. All of these people here today are counting on hundreds of thousands of person-years for pipefitters, electricians and ironworkers.

He is cutting their throats. He's eliminating their jobs, and he is undermining the regional economies of this province. That is economically incompetent. That is not a jobs plan; that is a jobs-killing plan—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

I would be remiss if I did not remind the member and all members, particularly when questions are asked of government policy, that it should be woven with government policy, and in the next round I will be listening carefully to ensure that that takes place.

New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Acting Premier: We're going to continue our pursuit of a new hospital for residents of south Niagara. We're on side with folks in Niagara Falls, Fort Erie, Port Colborne and Welland who want to see a new site. You've already cancelled the West Lincoln Memorial site.

Minister, the Liberals, under Kathleen Wynne, almost seem to believe that when you cross the Burlington Skyway, you've entered into New York state.

Let me make the case of why this is valid. Your own adviser, Kevin Smith, has said you actually save money

here. It's \$285 million cheaper to build a modern facility in Niagara Falls than to keep the existing sites open. He also makes the case that you can save \$10 million a year in administration that you can then put into hiring more nurses and attracting more doctors.

So I ask you, what's not to like about this plan? It saves money, it improves care and it's on side with hard-working families in south Niagara. Why are you against it?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister of Health has commented on this. There obviously is a debate within the Niagara community about this issue. I think the Leader of the Opposition knows there are many steps that must be taken before the government can make decisions on a new capital project such as this, including the submission of a proposal. We're currently reviewing the NHS proposal.

Funding is up at the NHS. It's receiving over \$330 million this year, a \$127-million increase since 2003, which represents 62%.

As my friend the Minister of the Environment reminds me constantly, we've invested in a new, state-of-the-art hospital to replace the existing St. Catharines General site and Ontario Street site. This 375-bed facility offers acute and critical in-patient services, surgical, emergency and ambulatory services for residents of St. Catharines—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, if you agree with the case for north Niagara, why are you against it for south Niagara and west Niagara? Why are you picking sides based on if the riding is represented by a Liberal or represented by somebody else? I think these interests should be done in the best interest of health care for local residents.

Kevin Smith is your adviser. He's made the recommendation. It sat on your desk for over a year. The NDP has made their position clear: They're against it. They've called it preposterous—but at least they have a position. It's got to be awfully difficult sitting on that fence for over a year, now, Minister—in fact, over a year. That's got to hurt. So get off the fence. Make a decision. And please don't tell us you're going to have another panel to study a previous panel. Get off the fence; make the call. I know where we stand: We support the hospital in Niagara Falls. Why don't you? Do you really think Niagara is part of New York state? Or will you make the right decision for the people in south Niagara?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Acting Premier.

Hon. John Milloy: You know, Mr. Speaker, I wasn't around to know the process that took place when the Leader of the Opposition was in government and he closed 28 hospitals. But I do know, from reading the PC white paper, that their plan calls for the firing of 2,000 nurses, which once again marks shades of the Harris government, where we saw cuts to health care and increased waiting times.

The fact of the matter is that under our watch, we have seen increases in the number of new hospitals and hospital refurbishments across Ontario. I'd invite the Leader of the Opposition to ask his colleague from Simcoe North about the Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care; ask his colleague from Barrie about the Royal Victoria Hospital expansion; ask his friend from Cambridge about the Cambridge hospital redevelopment; from Burlington about the Joseph Brant Hospital expansion; in Halton, the Milton District Hospital expansion. Mr. Speaker, I could go on—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. No, you won't.

New question.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Nick Lalonde was a young father, husband and worker. He died from a fall at a construction site in my riding just over three weeks ago. On Christmas Eve, 2009, four workers in Toronto were killed when the scaffolding they were working on collapsed. The subsequent investigation into workplace safety, led by Tony Dean, recommended among other changes the introduction of mandatory fall prevention safety training for workers.

As the minister knows, the development of that fall prevention safety standard and regulation has been going on for a number of years now. When does this government expect the heights training regulation to come into force?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for asking a very important question about an incident that I'm very much aware about in her community, in Waterloo. I was very saddened to hear about this particular incident, and every incident we hear when somebody at work is injured or, worse, loses their life.

The member opposite also knows that our respective offices have been in touch about this issue frequently since the incident took place. There is an active investigation looking at the causes going on right now. Health and safety and prevention are the number one priorities of this government, and we are working very hard, Speaker, in consultation with all our partners from industry to building trades in implementing the recommendations of the expert panel. There will be some very good news coming forward in terms of all the prior recommendations and the recommendations that were outlined by the Dean panel.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Again to the Minister of Labour: On December 16, 2010, then-Minister Fonseca wholeheartedly embraced the Health and Safety Expert Advisory Panel's recommendation that a heights training regulation be in force by December 2011. That's nearly two years ago, Minister, not two years from now.

Last Thursday it was reported that a heights training standard was developed in 2010 but never enacted. Since

June of this year, Nick Lalonde and eight other workers in Ontario have fallen to their deaths. Since 2010, the Ministry of Labour has failed to implement a life-saving regulation that was essentially ready to go.

Will this government bring a heights training regulation into force immediately and start saving lives on Ontario's construction sites?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I'm very proud that this Legislature unanimously voted on the recommendations that were outlined by the Dean panel. As a result, we have created the very first Chief Prevention Officer, here in Ontario, across the whole entire country.

1130

George Gritziotis, the Chief Prevention Officer, is working very hard, along with the Prevention Council, on a prevention strategy that will be coming out soon. We will also be announcing mandatory awareness training for all workers and supervisors across the province, something that this House agreed on.

We are actively consulting right now with the industry and with the workers on working-at-heights regulations, which the member opposite is speaking about, and also mandatory construction training for all construction workers as well. Soon I will be looking for their support when we bring forward those regulations.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Government Services. He will know that, throughout the world, all governments at the local, provincial and federal levels have been opening up vast sets of data to the public for free. These datasets are made available to the public for them to use as they see fit. Without the restrictions of copyright or patent, these datasets can be used to spark innovation, assist in problem-solving or even spur development in the creative economy.

I understand that our government recently announced an initiative that builds on Ontario's support of this global movement. When government data is made available to the public, it has the potential to support a dynamic and very innovative business climate.

Would the minister please explain to the House what steps the government is currently taking in the area of the issue of open data?

Hon. John Milloy: I thank the member for the question. The open data movement is international. It's about making non-confidential data accessible so that innovators, entrepreneurs, journalists and members of the public can use it—"manipulate it" is the term—link it to others; the term, again, is to mash it up, analyze it and use it to solve problems that affect all of us in our everyday lives.

For example, Ontario citizens can now look at data such as geological surveys, road repairs, how much money visitors to the province have spent here, and how many Ontario residents visited overseas countries. They can find out enrolment for every public and Catholic school in the province.

We are already well on our way. In November 2012, we launched an open data catalogue that can be found at www.ontario.ca/opendata, and we have more than 170 datasets that are available online for businesses and the public to use free of charge, with no copyright restrictions. They can use them as they see fit.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's encouraging to see that our government is taking these steps to make data available to the public and to build and add to this global movement. I know that the government has a plan to help businesses at many levels succeed, while also drawing investment into the province.

Finding new ways to innovate is often a great economic stimulator. Showing businesses that we're supporting them through open data is a great way to spark and encourage innovation. I know that in my riding of Oakville, specifically, there are companies in many sectors that could use this data to create even more jobs. When we support an innovative business climate, we ensure that businesses come, and invest in and help grow Ontario's economy.

How will open data work? What kind of jobs or business opportunities will it create for the people of this province?

Hon. John Milloy: The open data catalogue is making it easier for citizens and businesses to find and benefit from information that the government has collected. By sharing data, Ontario is encouraging innovation, economic development and job creation.

Let me give you a few examples. The Ontario Road Safety Annual Report, which is available on the MTO website, is used by road safety and injury prevention organizations such as the Traffic Injury Research Foundation to conduct various studies related to road safety. Other stakeholders who use this database include MADD, Arrive Alive and the CAA.

One dataset that we added in July 2013 shows where vital utilities are located around the province, such as for electricity, water, communications, heating, fuel and fibre optic stations. This kind of information is very useful for companies that are deciding where to locate. There are myriad examples, and they will continue to grow over the coming months.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Our party cleared the decks here so that the government can focus on what matters: jobs and the economy. Instead of creating jobs, your latest announcement was to hand the OSPCA \$5.5 million without accountability.

Look: I care deeply about the welfare of animals. I also care very deeply about the human beings that are looking for work and are stuck paying the bills.

Can you even tell me how you're going to measure whether Ontarians are getting any bang for those 5.5 million bucks, or is this just another case of Liberal spending with no strings attached?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I thank the member from Leeds–Grenville for his question. Yes, this was a wonderful announcement last Friday because I announced that \$5.5 million was going to the OSPCA. The OSPCA will be able to improve the care of animals and surveillance, and they will also be able to take action when animals are mistreated. They will be able to establish a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week centralized dispatch service. They will be able to create a special squad where trained investigators will crack down on puppy and kitten mills. They will be able to deliver specialized livestock training for investigators—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the minister: Ontarians have serious and legitimate questions about the OSPCA. They can't get basic answers regarding the organization's books, its investigation practices or even the qualifications of its inspectors. You've handed \$5.5 million more to the OSPCA and done nothing to make them accountable to the hard-working Ontarians who are picking up the tab. The Premier talks a lot about open government, yet the OSPCA remains cloaked in secrecy.

Minister, can you tell me what specific measures you have put in place for the windfall to ensure that Ontarians have full disclosure about the OSPCA's operations, investigations and fundraising activities?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, there will be a member of the ministry who will sit on the board, which was not happening in the past. OSPCA will also provide a progress report to the government regularly. I will also note that the animal welfare team has now signed an MOU with the OSPCA and the agricultural sector to ensure the best possible expertise. So we're making sure that the money we are investing will be to the benefit of animal welfare in Ontario: not like this party, which was supporting a bill that would strip the OSPCA of any oversight in the agricultural community. We're not going to go there. We'll make sure that there's—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. On the 15th anniversary of the Ontario Legislature's disabilities act resolution, the AODA Alliance is working to ensure that the government actually keeps its promises. On January 22 of this year, David Lepofsky, chair of the AODA Alliance, wrote to the Liberal government for information regarding the plans and actions to keep its election promise to effectively enforce the act.

After nearly seven months with no response, Lepofsky had to resort to filing a freedom-of-information applica-

tion. Finally, on October 2, he was told by the government that this information would cost him \$2,325 plus possible additional fees.

Why does the government believe it is acceptable to demand such an unreasonable sum from a volunteer organization that has no disposable funds? How free is freedom of information?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I thank the member opposite for the question. I've got the greatest respect for David Lepofsky. I've met with him as well, and with members of the alliance, and they do a fantastic job at making sure that this issue continues to be at the forefront of our society's ambitions.

I know that we're working very hard as well to make sure that businesses—for example, the public sector has already complied fully with the legislative and regulatory requirements of the act. Businesses are working hard as well, and I've made it a priority to make sure that they are doing their part on the various elements, the standards, the regulatory and legislative requirements that are there.

It also gives me the opportunity to update the House, as well, on the important work and the status of the AODA reviewer, because as the Legislature knows, every five years we're legally mandated to review it. Mayo Moran, the dean of the faculty of law at the University of Toronto, has undertaken that important work right now.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs on a point of order.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I just want to correct my record. Earlier today when I made a response regarding the RED program, Hansard says it was \$4.5 billion for RED. I wish it was, but the exact figure is \$4.5 million. I just want to correct the record.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is a point of order and members are always allowed to correct their record.

DEFERRED VOTES

FAIRNESS AND COMPETITIVENESS IN ONTARIO'S CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ ET LA COMPÉTITIVITÉ DANS L'INDUSTRIE ONTARIENNE DE LA CONSTRUCTION

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 74, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 to alter bargaining rights conferred by pre-1980 working agreements in the construction industry / Projet de loi 74, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations

de travail pour modifier le droit de négociier conféré par des accords de fait conclus avant 1980 dans l'industrie de la construction.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 74.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1141 to 1146.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On October 28, Mr. McNaughton moved third reading of Bill 74. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael	Milligan, Rob E.
Bailey, Robert	Holyday, Douglas C.	Munro, Julia
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Nicholls, Rick
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jackson, Rod	O'Toole, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Pettapiece, Randy
Clark, Steve	Leone, Rob	Scott, Laurie
Del Duca, Steven	MacLaren, Jack	Smith, Todd
Dunlop, Garfield	MacLeod, Lisa	Thompson, Lisa M.
Elliott, Christine	McDonnell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
Fedeli, Victor	McKenna, Jane	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	McNaughton, Monte	Yurek, Jeff

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	Miller, Paul
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gerretsen, John	Milloy, John
Balkissoon, Bas	Gélinas, France	Moridi, Reza
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Murray, Glen R.
Bisson, Gilles	Hatfield, Percy	Naqvi, Yasir
Bradley, James J.	Horwath, Andrea	Natyshak, Taras
Campbell, Sarah	Hoskins, Eric	Orazietti, David
Chan, Michael	Hunter, Mitzie	Piruzza, Teresa
Chiarelli, Bob	Jaczek, Helena	Prue, Michael
Colle, Mike	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Coteau, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sattler, Peggy
Crack, Grant	Leal, Jeff	Schein, Jonah
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Singh, Jagmeet
Dhillon, Vic	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Dickson, Joe	Marchese, Rosario	Takhar, Harinder S.
DiNovo, Cheri	Mauro, Bill	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	McMeekin, Ted	Vanthof, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McNeely, Phil	Wong, Soo
Forster, Cindy	Meilleur, Madeleine	Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 33; the nays are 60.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion lost.

Third reading negated.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Barrie has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the minister responsible for the 2015 Pan/Parapan Games concerning the budget for the games. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I would appreciate it very much if everyone stopped talking while I was trying to read a motion.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm also not impressed with people mentioning people's presence in this place.

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1150 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I have some special guests in the House today. I have Nolan Cattel, a grade 12 honours student from Meadowvale Secondary School, and Jaime Redford, a student from the University of Toronto. They are both joining me and my staff today as part of the job shadowing for those involved in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. I hope that they are able to continue this program for coming years, because I think it's very valuable; they have my full support. Welcome to the Legislature.

Miss Monique Taylor: I also have some guests with me today from Big Brothers Big Sisters. I have Calli-Ann Telford and Cody Librock, who are visiting and job-shadowing me today. My executive assistant, Norm MacAskill, is also with us today. He has been doing a wonderful job making sure they're getting around the Legislature today.

Mr. John Fraser: I also have a guest today: my friend, the principal emeritus of St. Michael's College and an excellent educator, Dr. Mark McGowan.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: There are a number of people from the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization who are joining us here today, and they will join us as the afternoon goes on. Some of them have been introduced, but the people who haven't been introduced are: Dan Weatherall, Isabella Rodas, Zoe Shoultz—who's spending the afternoon with me—Mitchell Emrich, Cathy Denyer, Joelle Lewis, Lori Plati and Megan Harrington. Let's give them a warm welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to welcome Mr. Celal Uçar from the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations, who is visiting the House today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COMMUNITIES IN BLOOM AWARDS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: We in Perth–Wellington enjoy a stunning natural environment, but it takes vision and leadership to protect our environment, to beautify our towns and cities and to make sure that everyone can enjoy the environment and partake in all that it offers. Communities across Perth–Wellington are showing that leadership. Today, I want to recognize two in particular: the city of Stratford and the town of Minto. On Saturday, the Communities in Bloom organization named Stratford winner of the prestigious grand champions category, honouring its commitment to civic pride, environmental

awareness and beautification efforts. It's a tremendous accomplishment.

I want to recognize Brad Beatty and everyone on the Stratford Communities in Bloom committee for their hard work and dedication. The award is a fitting way to honour the late Ted Blowes, whose strong support and early leadership inspired the result we see today. Stratford was also recognized for the Local Community Food Centre and its work to ensure that everyone can enjoy good local food.

I also want to congratulate the town of Minto for receiving a five-bloom rating and special mention of Palmerston Lions Heritage Park. Communities in Bloom presented Minto with the Butchart Gardens Land Reclamation Award. It is also a tremendous achievement. The horticultural society of the Palmerston Lions should be very proud of their hard work. Of Lions Park, the judges wrote: "This park will long serve as the event space of the community, thanks to the vision of its leaders and generous support of the community." I couldn't agree more.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Paul Miller: The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board is closing seven of its 18 secondary schools in the city of Hamilton. That's 40% of the public-board high schools slated for closure. These schools are being closed because the board is being forced to comply with the Ministry of Education's flawed funding formula, which funds per pupil rather than per program. The board is being forced to close schools before the ministry agrees to fund new structures or renovations to house all the displaced students.

Some of Ontario's highest suburban poverty zones are in Hamilton. The neighbourhood high schools have become an important community hub. Hamiltonians want schools kept open. Students want schools kept open. Staff want schools kept open. The school board's hands have been tied by an archaic funding formula that refuses to meet the modern realities of Ontario's changing cities.

The Liberal government has been developing the school board efficiencies and modernization strategy, which has come far too late to help Hamilton. If we can't keep schools open in our communities, at the very least we hope that the Ministry of Education ensures that funding is available so that when schools close, new or renovated schools are ready for students to move into.

The people of Hamilton deserve a better solution from the Ministry of Education than an austerity model of forced insolvency. Hamilton students deserve better.

ANNIVERSARY OF FOUNDING OF TURKEY

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: The Treaty of Lausanne, which recognized the boundaries of the modern state of Turkey, was signed on July 24, 1923, and the republic of Turkey was proclaimed on October 29, 1923. Britain was forced to lift its occupation of Istanbul and the Turkish

straits, had to call for a peace conference, negotiated for eight months, and Turkey received the international recognition it demanded as defined in the National Pact of 1920. Turkey gained control of the straits, provisions to regulate international commercial traffic rights later codified under the Montreux treaty of 1936.

The Turkish war of national liberation speaks to the courage, the tenacity and the determination of the Turkish people, who, by fighting the most powerful nations, achieved independence and sovereignty at Lausanne, and were and are a source of inspiration for others who struggle against imperialism, not only in the past but also today.

We celebrate and we congratulate all Turkish people on this memorable occasion. The flag has been raised, the cheers remembered, and the celebrations will commence here and around the world.

It is my honour to welcome and offer a special thank you to the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations. They are the heart and the soul of the Turkish community, and we thank them for their support.

As a woman and the mother of a daughter, I would like to say thank you to the Turkish people for the fact that they gave their women the vote long before anybody else even thought of it. Yay to Turkey!

COMMUNITIES IN BLOOM AWARDS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's a pleasure to rise today to recognize both Southwest Middlesex and Lambton Shores among the winners of the Communities in Bloom awards at this past weekend's national symposium and awards ceremony. Communities in Bloom is a non-profit organization focused on promoting environmental stewardship and economic development; increasing the tourism, hospitality and retail industries; as well as fostering community involvement through enhancing green spaces, natural environments and landscaping in local communities. I can tell you, Speaker, that the spirit of Communities in Bloom is alive and well throughout my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

I would like to offer warm congratulations to both Lambton Shores and Southwest Middlesex, two municipalities in my riding, for their accomplishments in shaping and improving our environment through community efforts. Thank you, and congratulations.

ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A few weeks ago, the Toronto Community Foundation released its most recent Vital Signs report. These reports show that Toronto is not growing as a single city but is slowly splitting into three distinct cities divided by income inequality.

The report says in 1970, 96% of neighbourhoods in Scarborough could be considered middle class. Today, the opposite is true: 83% of households are low-income.

Last year youth unemployment exceeded over 20%, and the jobs that exist are often precarious. An entire

generation is growing up unable to plan and build for the future.

Around the same time that the report was released, I met with stakeholders from across Trinity—Spadina to discuss ways of reducing—and better still, preventing—poverty. I would like to recognize the work of St. Stephen's Community House, a non-profit organization in my riding, for their help in organizing this meeting and bringing these stakeholders together.

These community service agencies, faith groups, housing advocates, legal aid lawyers, teachers and residents all offered various good ideas to tackle the issue of poverty, but one theme stood out above all: We can't keep thinking that our personal interests are separate from the community's interests. We can't claim society's benefits as our rightful entitlement while treating our neighbours who do not receive the same benefits as burdens. I would like to thank these community members for the reminder that prosperity cannot be sustained in a city divided by increasing inequality.

1510

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise again. Earlier, I was able to introduce all the Littles who had come to the House today, so it's a pleasure to rise again and perhaps explain what a "Little" is.

Big Brothers Big Sisters have invited all MPPs to participate in "Take a Little to the Legislature for a Day." The Littles met their mentor in my office earlier today and then have all headed out for a day of job shadowing with my fellow MPPs.

The Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring program provides boys and girls and young men and women with a role model, a friend to talk to and someone to share the experiences of growing up with.

As a former Big Brother, I mentored a little boy from Oakville in the past. Witnessing his transformation from a child into a confident young person is a remarkable thing I'll always remember. To this day, I have a special relationship with him, and I was actually the best man at his wedding.

So I want to thank you, and I want to thank Barbara Ferrone and Joelle Lewis of Big Brothers Big Sisters, and I want to extend congratulations on celebrating 100 years in Canada. I look forward to celebrating with everybody later this afternoon at a reception that will be held right here, where you can all come down and meet some of these wonderful young people and their mentors.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I stand today to relay the concerns of the corporation of the city of North Bay and several other communities in my riding regarding the government's Small Rural and Northern Municipal Infrastructure Fund.

Council in North Bay notes that despite consultation sessions hosted by the Ministry of Infrastructure, it was clearly communicated by a majority of stakeholders that a “per capita formula for sustainable funding” was preferred over the competitive or application process. On October 15, North Bay council resolved to ask the Premier and minister “to reconsider their approach to the allocation of year 2 and 3 of the fund in favour of the option supported by the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities.”

This government has set up a system where it will pick winners and losers, and pick the areas to parachute cash into, where it will benefit the Liberal Party at election time, as we have seen proven in the past, specifically through the gas plant scandal. Once again, this government has failed to listen to the needs of the north, and it’s time for a new government that will.

This is a motion of the city of North Bay. There are also similar motions from the municipality in my current community of Corbeil, where Mayor Bill Vrebosch has done extensive interviews. They talk about the AMO presentations where the government said they were listening but actually did something completely different.

RODERICK McDONALD

Mr. John Fraser: I’m pleased to stand today to pay tribute to a friend, Major Roderick McDonald, who passed peacefully last week in Ottawa at the age of 96.

Roderick—or Roddie, as he was also known—was born in Florence, Nova Scotia, in 1917. A proud Cape Bretoner, he graduated from Acadia University in 1939 and worked briefly in the lab at the Sydney Steel plant.

Like many of his generation, he enlisted in the military and served in the Royal Canadian Engineers in Sicily and in the liberation of Holland, where he helped many of the Dutch people, for whom he had a great respect.

Roddie commanded the number one radiation detection unit through the early 1950s and played a part in developing the dosimeter, radiation detection and safeguard technology that is used today.

I got to know Roddie through his stepson, my friend Mark McGowan, who’s in the gallery today.

Many years ago, Roddie would visit me at the store. I would special-order for him King Cole Tea, which you couldn’t find on store shelves anywhere in Ottawa. Roddie never forgot that.

Roddie was a much-loved son, brother, husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather, and he will be missed.

Last week, flags flew at half-mast at the Perley and Rideau Veterans’ Health Centre, where a celebration of his life will be held this Saturday.

Roddie, I am sure that you’ll be enjoying a cup of King Cole Tea on that day, smiling down on all of us.

GEORGETOWN HOSPITAL

Mr. Ted Arnott: I’m pleased that the Minister of Health is in the House to hear my statement today, because a year ago this month I was pleased to update the

House on the progress of the Georgetown Hospital renovation project.

As you’ll recall, Mr. Speaker, just before the 2011 election, on August 31, the Minister of Health visited Georgetown to announce a provincial grant of up to \$2.6 million to support the building of a new emergency department at our local hospital, coinciding with the installation of a new CT scanner. This announcement followed many months of planning and effort on the part of hospital staff and volunteers, the town of Halton Hills mayor, council and staff, as well as my own efforts and those of my staff, to convince the government to support these needed hospital renovations to improve local health service in our community.

Last week I was pleased to inform the minister that our new emergency department opened earlier this month, on October 9. She’ll be pleased to know that the first patient was triaged and registered in the new department at 7 a.m. sharp. I want to thank the hospital staff for all of their extra efforts to make the move to the new emergency department go so smoothly.

I’m informed that the next major milestone in the project is the installation and start-up of the new CT scanner. It is hoped that following the testing of the equipment and staff training, the hospital will be ready to start scanning patients the first week of December. It is anticipated that the entire project will be completed by the spring of 2014.

As I said I would do, I want to thank the Minister of Health for her support of the Georgetown Hospital project. At this time, I want to extend to her a public invitation for her to visit Georgetown again, when, working together, we officially open the new, renovated Georgetown Hospital.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Can’t we all just get along?

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated October 29, 2013, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MEMBERS’ ACCOMMODATION ALLOWANCES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES ALLOCATIONS DE LOGEMENT DES DÉPUTÉS

Mr. Milloy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 123, An Act to amend the Executive Council Act and the Legislative Assembly Act in relation to accommodation allowances / *Projet de loi 123, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Conseil exécutif et la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative en ce qui concerne les allocations de logement.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. John Milloy: Subsection 4(1) of the Executive Council Act provides for allowances for accommodation to be paid to ministers whose principal residence is more than 50 kilometres from the seat of government in Toronto.

Subsections 64(1) and 67(10) of the Legislative Assembly Act provide for allowances for accommodation to be paid in the same circumstances to the leaders of the opposition and recognized parties and to members of the assembly.

Amendments are made to restrict those subsections from applying to a member of the assembly if every part of the member's electoral district is 50 kilometres or less from the seat of government in Toronto.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I make this statement, I hope my voice holds out. I have a little bit of a frog in my throat today, but I'll do my best.

I'm pleased to take this opportunity to speak to a crucial issue that affects our government's ability to get people back to work and grow Ontario's economy. In tough economic times, our Employment Ontario network and the employment services and training programs it provides are more important than ever.

As well as providing job search services, the network offers a range of programs, including Second Career, apprenticeship training, and literacy and basic skills programs, all designed to meet the needs of people who are trying to get back to work.

Many of these programs are funded jointly by Ontario and the federal government. However, I say with regret and concern that the federal government's current direction will place these programs at risk, and the stakes are high for our vulnerable workers and our economy. In its 2013 budget, the federal government proposed a new Canada Job Grant, funded through the Labour Market Agreement. The federal government intends to cut 60% of its funding of programs that go to our most vulnerable, marginalized workers, and it's demanding that the provinces match that amount.

The impact in Ontario is huge. Combined, it amounts to a \$232-million hit to programs that serve those further from the labour market. This includes newcomers, social assistance recipients, persons with disabilities, older workers, aboriginal people and youth. Many of these clients experience significant barriers to employment. They are the same people who are left out of the employment insurance system and who have been hit hardest by the recent economic downturn and slow recovery. Ontario needs the flexibility to work with employers to address short-term needs while providing longer-term training to those who need it so that they can become employment-ready.

1520

The programs funded by the Labour Market Agreement—literacy skills, language training or bridging programs—are also crucial to integrating newcomers into the Ontario economy. We cannot afford a one-size-fits-all approach focused solely on addressing short-term labour market needs. We will not leave our vulnerable workers out in the cold. We need a longer-term sustainable approach to employment, one that provides Ontario with the qualified skilled workers our economy needs.

The Ontario government has told the federal government that we cannot support its intention to take funding and resources away from our most vulnerable Ontarians, and it is not just Ontario that sees it that way. In September, a resolution was passed by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce advocating "that the federal government, instead of implementing its own Canada Job Grant program, negotiate with the provincial/territorial governments to renew labour market agreements ... in accordance with on-the-job training priorities."

Some small and medium-sized businesses have said that they might not have the financial resources needed to participate.

All of Canada's provinces and territories agree: An untested and unproven program that takes money away from programs that are working is not a good idea, and make no mistake, current provincial programs are working.

A report from provincial and territorial labour ministers, Building Skills Together, profiled this success. Building Skills Together showed that 87% of clients are employed after completing current programs, and the average client increased his or her earnings by \$323 per week.

Here in Ontario, we can easily demonstrate the success of our Employment Ontario programs. Our Employment Service program, which served over 600,000 Ontarians last year, saw 78% of our clients find employment or go on to further their education or training. Ontario's Second Career program has helped over 68,000 laid-off workers upgrade their skills since 2008. A recent survey of Second Career clients found that after one year, roughly 81% found employment. Our registered apprenticeship program has helped ensure that there are more than 120,000 apprentices learning a trade today, which is 60,000 more than in 2002-03. Our Literacy and Basic

Skills Program helped 33,000 learners last year, with 67% going on to further education and employment.

Mr. Speaker, these programs are working, and as Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, I constantly have the privilege of meeting people who have been helped by our programs, people like Jesse Darby, a Toronto resident and member of Serpent River First Nation. Jesse graduated from George Brown College and went on to complete the carpentry pre-apprenticeship training program at Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training in Toronto. Jesse was an inspiring mentor to his peers and is now well on the way to completing his apprenticeship training and starting his own business.

This is not merely training for the sake of training, as my federal counterpart has suggested; in fact, our track record of success suggests that provinces are best placed to design and deliver programs and services that reflect local labour market needs.

Of course, I agree that we must focus on continuous improvement to get even better results. We support the notion of more employer-focused training and participation, and in Ontario, we're working to make our training programs more accessible and more business- and client-focused. But improvements must be in the interests of Ontarians, reflecting the different labour market conditions across the country. Even within Ontario, our people and our economy are incredibly diverse. Ontario needs a strong federal partner to help ensure our workers are equipped to succeed in the face of long-term structural economic shifts and ongoing recovery. This includes continued stable and predictable funding for skills training and employment supports. Creating jobs, growing our economy and supporting the skills needs of our most vulnerable workers are absolutely critical.

In the coming days, my colleagues in other provinces and territories and I look forward to meeting with our federal counterpart, Minister Jason Kenney. I'll certainly be raising these concerns and will be focused on practical solutions that will help all Canadians.

We're not looking for a conflict with the federal government on this. We'd much prefer a collaborative approach. But let's be clear: We will not sell out our vulnerable workers to fund a program that is still untested and unproven, nor will we accept the federal government's claims that they are being flexible with the provincial concerns about this program. They must first demonstrate that by suggesting alternative sources of funding for the Canada Job Grant, other than funding it on the backs of our most vulnerable workers.

And so we urge the federal government to work collaboratively with the provinces and territories to develop and fund training programs that help all Canadians get the skills they need to find work and achieve their goals and build a stronger economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm quite pleased to respond to the comments made by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I guess we have a completely different

view of the Labour Market Agreement and what's actually happened.

I heard the minister bragging about the Second Career program and all the work they've done in literacy. We all know that literacy has basically been frozen for a decade under this government, literacy skills training under the community-based literacy program. So I have no idea how this is going to impact them any more than they could possibly have already had an impact.

My understanding is, under the Labour Market Agreement, \$500 million goes to the whole country. Of that \$500 million, 300 million of those dollars will be spent on the Canada Job Grant, so there will be \$200 million left over. The entire province of Ontario gets about 38% of that \$300 million, or about \$114 million will be going into the Canada Job Grant.

What I like about it, and what I've heard from my employers—and I've got a few quotes here as well, Mr. Speaker—is it shows the commitment of the employer. We all know that things like apprenticeship completion rates—and a lot of the people you may have trained in the Second Career program might have got some kind of a job, or they think they've got a job, and then there's no commitment from the employer to keep that person around.

This \$5,000 they put into the \$15,000 of training I think is a very good idea, because it shows a committed employer in any part of that particular job a person may have, whether it's starting at the bottom and retraining for a career that will hire, or in a management position, where you might need training to go even higher than that. I think that it's very positive.

I heard Minister Kenney speak a couple of weeks ago, and he spoke to a roomful of people who I thought were really excited about the Canada Job Grant.

A couple of quotes I wanted to pass on—and, Mr. Speaker, I should say, I've been encouraged to promote the Canada Job Grant by a number of construction associations etc. across our province because they really believe in it.

I'll give you this one quote, an example: "The Canada Job Grant will allow an increase in the delivery of training and the capacity to access such training. Speaking on behalf of the building trades, Canadian operating officer Robert Blakely said 'We are very much heartened to see that the'" government of Canada "'has listened to industry and delivered on skills. The Canada Job Grant will allow us to deliver strongly needed skills in a much more timely way to the young Canadians who need those skills to access the best jobs in our growing industry.'"

The second quote is from the Canadian oil and gas association: "Canada's oil and gas producers and the construction unions support governments in their efforts to provide Canadians with the skills they need to access well-paying and challenging jobs in our sector. Collaboration with the provinces will be crucial.

"Unique approaches to tweaking the training system in Canada, like the Canada Job Grant, will be instrumental

in ensuring our economy directly benefits. The proposed grant is an interesting way to link training to employers' needs while optimizing training capacity in industry."

I understand the provincial governments may be opposed to this. Is it because this money is flowing directly to the employers in most cases to provide that training? Or is it all about a bunch of fancy announcements they want to make? We all know under the Second Career program, you spent over \$7 million in advertising the program. That was money that could have gone into training.

1530

I just can't understand why it's such a terrible thing now. On top of that, it's only impacting a very small amount of money. What is not impacted by this is the \$2 billion to the Labour Market Development Agreement, which amounts to \$760 million coming back to your ministries. That's \$760 million. Really, all that's impacted here is \$114 million that's going to the Canada Job Grant, which will be impacted in the province. I'm under the impression that if you're not in favour of this they're going to go it alone, they're going to go without you, because they feel that important about it.

On top of that, I understand that when this program is fully implemented, there will be something like 130,000 people a year being impacted by this Canada Job Grant. I think it's a really good opportunity to work with the private sector, not isolate them like we've done with things like the College of Trades etc., but to actually work with these people and make sure they do an excellent job. When those employers are paying a portion of that training, that shows they have the commitment. Other than that, they have no commitment, and all we have with the current system is a bunch of fancy announcements made by the minister and all these other ministers across this province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to make these comments today.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to state the concerns of the New Democrats on the new Canada Job Grant that was promoted in the federal 2013 budget.

Currently, the specific details of the program are being determined through negotiations with the provinces and territories of individual labour market agreements in consultation with employer associations, educational institutions and labour organizations.

New Democrats worry that these funds will go to specific training priorities as determined by employers who apply for the grant, rather than by workers, by provinces or by the community and the educational organizations that deliver programs currently supported with these funds. We are also concerned that the federal and provincial funding through this grant could simply subsidize training already provided or planned by businesses rather than introducing additional training. Moreover, they could also become an indirect wage subsidy for businesses, with no strings attached.

This program also represents a significant shift in focus for these federal training funds. They are a shift away from broad-based workplace skills development,

literacy and essential skills to assist workers with a lower level of skills and lower rates of participation in the workplace, and a shift towards short-duration training for position-specific occupations or funding to subsidize specific higher skills.

The new Canada Job Grant will likely be funded with \$300 million taken from current transfers from workplace literacy and essential skills training provided to provinces and territories through labour market agreements. Simply stated, New Democrats do not support this transfer.

The federal government provided \$500 million annually through the LMA since 2008-09, which replaced labour market partnership agreements with provinces and territories and also provided funding for literacy, essential skills and workplace skills development. In the first two years of these programs, they reached 550,000 Canadians. The labour market agreements funded programs designed to enhance the skills of low-skilled workers and to increase the labour force participation of under-represented groups, including immigrants and aboriginal people. The program targeted unemployed workers not eligible for EI and employed workers with lower skill levels.

The 2013 budget stated that the federal government would like to focus on the remaining \$200 million in the new LMAs and also on training for in-demand jobs, a very significant change from the current program. According to the budget, the federal government will continue to provide the remaining \$200 million to the provinces, allotted on a per capita basis through renegotiated LMAs to support the delivery of critical employment services such as counselling, job search assistance and administration, but this will be a 60% cut from the federal government funding for these services.

Provinces that participate in the Canada Job Grant will also need to match the federal funding for it. So to maintain funding for current services at the existing levels, it will require a \$600-million increase in spending by provinces.

New Democrats are very concerned about the changing face of the training for Ontario's workers and are keen to ensure that this government is doing everything they can to make sure Ontarians receive the training and investment that they deserve.

PETITIONS

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents and municipalities across Ontario want the ability to veto and/or plan for industrial wind turbines in their community; and

"Whereas ratepayers in Ontario want all forms of energy generation to be affordable and reliable; and

"Whereas residents of Ontario want the feed-in tariff program to be eliminated; and

"Whereas residents of Ontario want to protect environmentally sensitive areas like the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges moraine from the development of wind turbines;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support Huron-Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's bill, the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act, and call committee hearings immediately on the bill."

Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with this petition, and I want to thank the good people of Creemore for signing it.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints against children's aid societies; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate complaints against children's aid societies; and

"Whereas people who feel they have been wronged by the actions of children's aid societies are left feeling helpless with nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate children's aid societies."

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree with this more. I'll affix my name to it and give it to page Louis to bring to the Clerk.

CELLULAR TRANSMISSION EQUIPMENT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas cellular communications towers are proposed to be built in the vicinity of Bronte in Oakville;

"Whereas Industry Canada has ultimate authority to approve the location of cellular communications towers under the federal Radiocommunication Act;

"Whereas the province of Ontario has no jurisdiction in the placement of cell towers;

"Whereas the town of Oakville has very limited jurisdiction in the placement of cellular towers;

"Whereas many area residents and local elected officials have expressed concerns with the proposed location and proximity to residential areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada grant municipalities the right to have enhanced participation in the placement of cellular communications towers in residential areas; and

"That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada place a moratorium on the construction of cellular towers within 500 metres of residential homes until the implementation of an improved municipal approval process."

Speaker, I agree with this and send it to the table with Sarhan again.

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to present these petitions from the riding of Durham, which read as follows:

"Whereas approximately 20% of Ontario's electricity is produced at the Darlington generating station in my riding of Durham;

"Whereas in addition to refurbishing the four existing reactors at Darlington the building of new capacity is important for the future of Ontario's manufacturing sector and for jobs and investment" across "Ontario;

"Whereas a study by the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters in 2012 concluded the building of a new two-reactor plant at Darlington would directly employ more than 10,000 people and would support employment for an additional 10,000 others in Canada for approximately a five-year period;

"Whereas Ontario's Ministry of Energy says Ontario Power Generation has already spent an estimated \$180 million in preparations" for building the two new reactors;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Ontario's elected MPPs and the provincial government reaffirm their commitment to the complete refurbishment of all four units at the Darlington generating station and that the Ontario government reinstate the original plan for the completion of two new reactors at the Darlington generating station."

I'm pleased to sign this, support it and present it to Sophia, one of the pages here.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas the spring bear hunt was eliminated by the previous government in 1999;

"Whereas the absence of the spring bear hunt has reduced the number of black bears harvested each year by an average of approximately 1,400 bears;

"Whereas over the course of 14 years, that has likely resulted in a substantial rise in the bear population;

1540

"Whereas the growth of the bear population seems to be resulting in more human-bear encounters and an increased risk that aggressive bear activity could result in people's physical harm or death;

"Whereas the growing bear population also negatively impacts livestock, bees and moose calves;

"Whereas the return of Ontario's spring bear hunt could help address these issues—as well as increasing tourism in northern Ontario, which could provide a boost to the region's economy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support MPP Bill Mauro's private member's bill, Bill 114, to bring about the return of Ontario's spring bear hunt."

I support this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to Helen.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it is the duty and responsibility of the Ministry of Economic Development to oversee and enforce accessibility standards and requirements set forth under the Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA);

"Whereas there are over 1,950 people living with disabilities in the Waterloo region who are unemployed;

"Whereas there are physical as well as systemic barriers preventing Ontarians with disabilities from finding meaningful employment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the Ministry of Economic Development utilize an independent review process and expand current AODA enforcement activities beyond the assessment of voluntarily submitted accessibility reports, and use the powers, authority and penalties set forth under the act to ensure compliance with the requirements therein; and

"We ask that all ministries of the Ontario government work collaboratively to take action and assist Ontarians with disabilities to gain meaningful employment through the following mechanisms: removal of physical barriers; ensuring accessible transit; incentivizing job creators; creating an emphasis on affordable and accessible training and educating people with disabilities for gainful and sustainable employment; removal of ODSP penalties that discourage employment, such as health insurance for all employed with disabilities."

I fully support this petition and I will be giving this petition to Kate.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Jim McDonnell: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health implemented major changes to the provision of OHIP physiotherapy services as of August 1st; and

"Whereas this will drastically reduce the number of allowable treatments to 12 per year for people who are currently eligible for 100 treatments annually; and

"Whereas funding for physiotherapy services to seniors in long-term-care homes will be cut by almost 50%; and

"Whereas ambulatory seniors in retirement homes would have to travel offsite for physiotherapy; and

"Whereas under the changes of August 1, the cost of visits under the CCAC model will rise to \$120 per visit, rather than the current fee of \$12.20 under OHIP;

"Whereas these changes will deprive seniors and other eligible clients from the many health and mobility benefits of physiotherapy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the delisting of OHIP physiotherapy clinics and services be reversed."

I agree with this petition and will be signing it, and I pass it off to page Aiden.

TAXATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the cost of living in northwestern Ontario is significantly higher than other regions of the province due to the high cost of necessities such as hydro, home heating fuel, gasoline and auto insurance; and

"Whereas an increase in the price of any of these essential goods will make it even more difficult for people living in northwestern Ontario to pay their bills and put food on the table;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reject any proposed increase to the harmonized sales tax, gas tax or any other fees or taxes in the northwest; and instead investigate other means such as increasing corporate tax compliance or eliminating corporate tax loopholes in order to fund transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area."

I support this, will affix my signature and give it to page Helen to deliver to the table.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas small businesses not only employ thousands of Ontarians with well-paying jobs, they also play a vital role strengthening Ontario's economy; and

"Whereas providing tax relief to small and local businesses strengthens the economy and creates a business climate that attracts investment and helps create jobs; and

"Whereas the government has taken several other initiatives to making Ontario the most attractive place to do business in North America;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 105, Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013, introduced on September 24, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Finance."

I fully support this and will give it to page Tristan.

DIABETES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government implemented cuts to the Ontario health insurance program such that Ontario residents suffering from diabetes saw their annual eligibility for blood sugar test strips reduced to 200 per year, less than one a day; and

"Whereas a blood sugar test strip costs approximately 70 cents; and

"Whereas this latest cut to services to Ontario patients is just another misguided measure to nickel-and-dime Ontarians; and

"Whereas a focus on preventing disease and hospitalization is in the long-term interest of patients, their families and the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately reinstate full and unlimited eligibility for blood sugar test strips covered by OHIP for all Ontario residents suffering from diabetes."

I agree with this petition and will be signing it and passing it off to page Victoria.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it is the duty and responsibility of the Ministry of Economic Development to oversee and enforce accessibility standards and requirements set forth under the Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA);

"Whereas there are over 1,950 people living with disabilities in the Waterloo region who are unemployed;

"Whereas there are physical as well as systemic barriers preventing Ontarians with disabilities from finding meaningful employment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the Ministry of Economic Development utilize an independent review process and expand current AODA enforcement activities beyond the assessment of voluntarily submitted accessibility reports, and use the powers, authority and penalties set forth under the act to ensure compliance with the requirements therein; and

"We ask that all ministries of the Ontario government work collaboratively to take action and assist Ontarians with disabilities to gain meaningful employment through the following mechanisms: removal of physical barriers; ensuring accessible transit; incentivizing job creators;

creating an emphasis on affordable and accessible training and educating people with disabilities for gainful and sustainable employment; removal of ODSP penalties that discourage employment, such as health insurance for all employed with disabilities."

I affix my signature to the petition and deliver it to page Arianna.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas small businesses not only employ thousands of Ontarians with well-paying jobs, they also play a vital role strengthening Ontario's economy; and

"Whereas providing tax relief to small and local businesses strengthens the economy and creates a business climate that attracts investment and helps create jobs; and

"Whereas the government has taken several other initiatives to making Ontario the most attractive place to do business in North America;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 105, Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013, introduced on September 24, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Finance."

I obviously agree with this, will sign it and send it down with Jake.

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and vehicle emissions have declined significantly from 1998 to 2010; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to eliminate the Drive Clean program."

I affix my name to this, because I support it, and give it to page Phoebe to take to the table.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thank you to our caucus Chair for his guidance on this. I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas the spring bear hunt was eliminated by the previous government in 1999;

1550

"Whereas the absence of the spring bear hunt has reduced the number of black bears harvested each year by an average of approximately 1,400 bears;

"Whereas over the course of 14 years, that has likely resulted in a substantial rise in the bear population;

"Whereas the growth of the bear population seems to be resulting in more human-bear encounters and an increased risk that aggressive bear activity could result in people's physical harm or death;

"Whereas the growing bear population also negatively impacts livestock, bees and moose calves;

"Whereas the return of Ontario's spring bear hunt could help address these issues—as well as increasing tourism in northern Ontario, which could provide a boost to the region's economy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support MPP Bill Mauro's private member's bill, Bill 114, to bring about the return of Ontario's spring bear hunt."

Of course, Speaker, I support this, will sign it and hand it to Louis to give to the desk.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time for petitions has ended.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WIRELESS SERVICES AGREEMENTS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES CONVENTIONS DE SERVICES SANS FIL

Ms. MacCharles moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 60, An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device / *Projet de loi 60, Loi visant à mieux protéger les consommateurs en ce qui concerne les conventions de consommation portant sur les services sans fil accessibles au moyen d'un téléphone cellulaire, d'un téléphone intelligent ou de tout autre appareil mobile semblable.*

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm very pleased to rise today to speak to third reading of this bill. I know I have staff coming from my ministry as well. I do want to just acknowledge them, if I may, quickly because I think everybody knows that while the minister is in charge of

the ministry, it's the ministry that does a lot of the heavy lifting on this work. So I just want to acknowledge Deputy Giles Gherson; also Jennifer Brown from his office; and Marilyn Marshall from the legal department, who will be here shortly.

Madam Speaker, on April 29 of this year, I rose in the House to introduce legislation to protect and strengthen the rights of Ontario consumers in one very significant sector of the marketplace: cellphone and wireless service agreements. The Wireless Service Agreements Act, 2013, would, if passed, provide significantly better protections to more than 80% of Ontario consumers who have contracts for cellphones, smart phones and similar mobile devices.

I'm proud to rise again today in the House to begin third reading debate on this important legislation that is in keeping with the commitment that we made as a government in the throne speech, and that will bring greater fairness and transparency to wireless service agreements entered into by the people of Ontario. If passed, this bill would have a widespread, positive impact on the daily lives of more than three quarters of the people of this province.

Every day, Ontarians rely on wireless devices while in their homes, at their jobs, at school, travelling—and even here in the Legislature, if I may say, Madam Speaker. The spectrum of users is indeed broad and covers literally everyone: parents, children, grandparents, students, commuters, employers and employees. Many of us use these wireless services daily in many ways, including talking, texting, making plans, responding to emergencies, watching videos or playing games—as my kids like to do—sending emails or sharing with friends through social media.

Although almost everyone uses cellphones—and I'll have to put on the table here right now, Speaker, that I actually use three: two for work and a personal one. My honourable colleague and friend Dr. Hoskins has been able to consolidate all his into one device, so he's my role model going forward.

But few of us really fully understand the contracts we sign for these agreements. Many of us open our cellphone bills and find that it's impossible to understand the particular details of the costs. We introduced this bill to address these kinds of issues. Our goal is to help make it easier for consumers to understand their cellphone and wireless service contracts, and what those services actually cost. We also introduced this bill to help consumers better understand their rights and obligations, and we introduced this bill to help contribute to a dynamic wireless marketplace.

Over the last two weeks, this bill was discussed by my honourable colleagues in the House. Members at the committee have been very involved in the committee hearings, and I'm very appreciative of that. Stakeholders and members of the public were offered an opportunity to present their views and comment about the proposed bill. The committee has heard from a number of interested parties, who shared valuable insight and information

about this bill and how, if passed, it would help to better inform consumers in Ontario and help them know their rights and obligations when buying cellphone services.

We also heard how we could make some improvements to this proposed legislation. We listened. As a result of the valuable feedback at committee, coupled with feedback to my ministry from the stakeholders and the public over many months, several amendments were made to the draft Wireless Services Agreements Act to further clarify to consumers of this province.

We have incorporated changes to better align our proposed bill with the federal Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, or CRTC, as we know it, and their national wireless code that was released earlier in June, but after the introduction of our bill. The CRTC's final national code included additional consumer protections that were not in the draft code last winter. Those changes will enhance and strengthen consumer protection. As a result, our bill is better positioned now, complements and builds on the protections under that national code, and will benefit Ontario consumers.

The most important change that we've made to Bill 60 since I introduced it is to bring its cancellation formula in line with the formula set out by the national code—that is, the CRTC's code. That is a 24-month contract period. What this means is that all contracts could be cancelled by a consumer at no cost after two years.

Another change would ensure that consumers' phone numbers are protected. If a contract is for a fixed term, the consumer could agree to an automatic monthly extension at the end of the term. What this means is that consumers would avoid losing their cellphone number if they had not yet managed to sign up for a new contract.

The national code will take effect soon. Actually, it will take effect on December 2, and it's our hope that the provincial and the national provisions will together provide comprehensive protections for consumers. With the strong enforcement measures included in our bill, Ontario consumers would benefit from these added protections. Similar to the CRTC, we want to support the industry as it makes the required changes to meet new consumer protection provisions.

I'd like to take a few moments now to outline the main features of our Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2013, and then go into a few important details of these features. In summary, Bill 60 would strongly benefit consumers. It would first empower consumers to find the right cellphone and wireless services contract for their needs and budgets. Second, it helps consumers get out of contracts that no longer suit their needs, at minimal cost. Third, it prevents cellphone providers from surprising consumers with any unexpected changes to their contracts over its life.

This bill, if passed, would make it easier and less confusing for consumers to understand what they are contracting for out of this myriad of competing offers that we see in the marketplace. The bill makes it clear that consumers have rights to transparent, plain-language contracts—contracts which disclose important contract

terms, spell out what services come with the basic fees, which would have added costs, how these services would be accessed and what restrictions would apply.

For example, providers would need to disclose if a long distance plan is available only within Ontario. Only one contract per device would be permitted, prohibiting multiple concurrent contracts, and consumers would receive the contract in a form they can keep, such as an electronic document that can be printed. Contracts would also need to include the retail value of a handset and the real cost to the consumer of phones provided at a "free" or discounted price. If supplemental warranty coverage on the handset or device is offered at an additional charge, the consumer would need to be given information on the manufacturer's warranty that will come with the device anyway.

1600

As I said earlier, the bill allows consumers to walk away from a contract at no cost after a maximum of two years. If a consumer needs or wants to cancel earlier, they must also receive information in their contract on how the cancellation fees are calculated. Cellphone providers would also need to give clear information to consumers on how roaming costs are calculated and when they will be incurred, and on whether a cellphone is locked and for how long.

We believe that clear, transparent contracts would help address many of the frustrations that consumers have expressed about confusing wireless contracts. We know that these complaints have been increasing year after year. When the federal Commissioner for Complaints for Telecommunications Services appeared earlier this year before a hearing of the CRTC, he noted a 250% rise in complaints over the past four years, with wireless sector complaints accounting for more and more of the commission's workload.

Another survey, by a social advocacy group called OpenMedia.ca, compiled the opinions and complaints of 2,800 cellphone users across Canada and called for an overhaul of the Canadian cellphone market. The survey showed that consumers are unhappy about what they view as restrictive contracts and price gouging. This bill would make it easier for consumers to understand the terms of their cellphone contracts.

Another important element that would empower consumers is that we have a provision in our bill to provide all-in, inclusive advertising. When a provider advertises prices for wireless service plans, they must show the all-in price of the entire multi-year contract, not just the monthly charge—the total cost obligation of the consumer over the life of the contract. No extra add-on charges would be allowed based on advertised prices. We believe this transparency would let consumers more easily compare prices and understand the full cost of the contract and its affordability as they shop for cellphones that best suit their needs. The purpose is to empower consumers to get the right wireless contract for their needs and budget. The purpose of our bill is not to tell telecommunications businesses how to run their business;

the purpose of our bill is to make sure that consumers get the information they need, in a fair and transparent manner.

A second feature of this bill, as I mentioned earlier, is that it would help consumers terminate contracts more easily and at a low cost. This proposed legislation would, if passed, give the consumer the right to cancel a wireless service agreement at any time by giving notice to their service provider. The cost to cancel depends, of course, on the type of agreement. However, Bill 60 proposes strict limits on the actual cancellation fees. For example, to cancel a fixed-term contract that does not include a handset, the cost would be 10% of the price of any outstanding services, up to a maximum of \$50. This means that the highest price the consumer would pay to cancel their contract is just \$50, and that's quite a bit different than what consumers are facing today.

If a handset was provided, the consumer, of course, would be responsible for any unpaid amount of the value of the discount they received when they purchased the phone. As well, if a consumer does not get a copy of their contract when it's signed or if the provider does not make all the disclosures required by this legislation, including all of the terms of the contract, the consumer would have the right to cancel the agreement within one year of signing it, and the cellphone provider would have to refund all payments made under the contract to the consumer.

How would this bill prevent surprise costs or service changes during the life of the agreement? This is a question I often get asked at the ministry, and this is the third main feature of Bill 60. Not only must the contract include all the key terms, but this proposed legislation prohibits providers from making unilateral contract changes. Consumers must give explicit consent before a fixed-term contract can be amended, extended or renewed. This means that consumers would have to agree to any changes to the agreement before it's made, and they must get an up-to-date copy of the agreement if it's amended or renewed. Automatic renewal of a fixed-term contract without consumer consent would no longer be allowed, Speaker.

If passed, this legislation would allow expiring fixed-term contracts that have not been renewed to automatically become month-to-month contracts on the same terms as their expired fixed-term contract, as long as this is provided for in the contract. Again, this means consumers will not lose their telephone number if they've not yet had the opportunity to renew their contract or enter into a new contract before their current contract expires.

As well, under the proposed legislation consumers could not be charged for services they could not access while their handset was being repaired while under warranty. For example, if a consumer received a loaner phone while their phone was being repaired under warranty, the loaner phone would need to be provided free of charge. This would not apply to phones that are not covered by warranty, nor could consumers be

charged for surprise costs incurred for the use of a phone after it has been reported lost or stolen, like long-distance or roaming charges. I know I'll appreciate that as a mom of two teenagers. I won't even acknowledge here in the House how many phones we've lost in our house and how expensive that has proven to be.

We believe all of these terms and features would offer strong protections for Ontario consumers, and they are backed by strong enforcement measures when a service provider does not follow the rules. That, I might say, is another difference of our bill as compared to the CRTC code, and that is related to our enforcement powers at the provincial level, as does exist in some other provinces that have similar legislation.

Bill 60 also gives a consumer the right to sue the provider for three times the amount the consumer is owed if the consumer is owed a refund and the company is refusing to pay. As mentioned, while consumers are protected by the national code, which puts into place rules that must be followed, our Bill 60 does go a step further with strong enforcement measures. This adds some very important protections going beyond what the national code provides, particularly when it relates to those contract terms.

The national code, for example, would address complaints through mediation on a case-by-case basis. Our bill would address ongoing systemic problems via compliance orders so that all consumers would be protected.

Basically, the national code is very much a voluntary code and things would be reviewed case by case, whereas in the province of Ontario we would have much stronger enforcement provisions.

We designed our bill, as have other provinces, as I've mentioned—to name them specifically: Quebec, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia—to fit within provincial jurisdiction and to coexist with this national code. We are pleased that the providers are already complying with the laws of other provinces that are similar to Bill 60, so we know this can work. It's already working in other provinces in Canada.

In the future, regulations may be developed, after consultation with industry and stakeholders, to add other protections, to clarify definitions and ensure a smooth transition. The mobile phone companies were very helpful to us in the development of this legislation, and we continue to listen to them to make sure the transition is as smooth as possible.

Bill 60 provides authority for regulations that would require service providers to give customers a personalized contract summary for each contract. Fifteen-day trial periods may be considered in the future to align Ontario's legislation with similar rules that appear in the CRTC's national code. For contracts that are subject to cancellation fees, a trial period may be considered to allow consumers to evaluate a provider's services without fully committing themselves and then facing cancellation charges should they decide not to continue with the contract.

To align with other provisions of the national code, other regulations could put caps on billing for data

roaming and data coverage charges without first obtaining consumer consent. It would also be possible for regulations to provide that consumers get regular statements on their use of services under a contract. This would be something new and that's not actually found in the national code.

Of course, all these rules would be considered only with input from the industry, the stakeholders and, of course, the public. We know that the public expressed interest in these items, some of which are now part of the CRTC national code. By considering adding them in the future through regulation-making authority provisions, consumers would further benefit from stronger enforcement measures that our proposed legislation offers. However, it would only be effective if all the parties come to the table to offer clarity and protection for consumers in Ontario.

1610

We believe that all these measures strengthen consumer protection, help build a strong economy and ensure a fair, safe and informed marketplace.

This government has a responsibility to Ontario consumers and their families to ensure that cellphone agreements they sign each year are clear, comprehensive, easy to use and easy to understand. The approximately 80% of Ontarians who rely on wireless communications in their day-to-day lives are counting on us.

I call on this House to support this bill so Ontario residents can get the protections they want and deserve.

In the end, we want to help Ontario families and individuals be confident and comfortable when making decisions on their wireless use and, indeed, in everything they buy. We want them to make informed choices, spend wisely and protect their hard-earned money.

Confident consumers help build a strong economy, and a stronger economy is definitely something everyone in this province can support.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to address this wireless services proposed legislation. Right off the top, I want to welcome Mitchell Emrich, sitting up in the visitors' gallery. Give us a wave, Mitchell. Mitchell is shadowing MPPs as a Little Brother. I think he was previously with Kevin Flynn. He's up there with my legislative assistant, Chris Rell. Chris is the one on the right. Staff look younger and younger.

Hon. James J. Bradley: They do, don't they? Even with a beard.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Right; not Mitchell.

There was mention of the economy by the minister. There are an awful lot of pressing issues that we're dealing with this fall and this winter. We're not out of the woods yet on the jobs front. Certainly people down in my riding—I know this from door-knocking this past spring—are having trouble paying the bills, hydro bills, their phone bills and their cellphone bills. Many young people have cellphones. I guess something like 80% of us have cellphones. But so many young people have

cellphones, and they're having trouble paying these bills. They're having trouble understanding the contracts. They're trying to renegotiate their contracts to make them work a little better for their particular needs.

You put that on top of young people, with a projected deficit, something like \$30.2 billion in the next four years; we're looking at a projected debt of \$411.4 billion in fiscal year 2017-18—just something else we're going to land on the heads of young people.

I welcome the chance to address Bill 60. It's titled Wireless Services Agreements Act. We're leaning towards this legislation. There are some mixed feelings. We know there was a private member's bill that came forward several years ago from Mr. Oraziotti. I thought it was well done. It was understandable. I find the more I work on this, the more complex it seems to get, especially when you start hearing testimony before committee and then start wrestling with amendments.

But I'm really wondering now, should we be backing off a bit on this particular provincial legislation? To my mind, it seems to be superseded by the national wireless code that we've just heard about from the minister. We've heard now that the federal government has kicked in on an area of jurisdiction that is federal, and from what I can see, it explicitly trumps any provincial legislation. So the question is: To what extent is this piece of proposed legislation obsolete?

Traditionally, this area is federal. I wonder why there was this three-year delay. We know there was proration in between. In fact, the last time I spoke to this wireless legislation, as I recall, I'd finished up—it was close to 6 o'clock, and I'll be darned but within an hour, Mr. McGuinty prorogued the House right after that. That was the last piece of legislation that we discussed before prorogation.

I certainly want to recognize the work of MPP McDonell from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. He has been the critic for consumer services for the past two years. I'm now the new critic, a few weeks into this. Like I say, as I get involved in this, I'm changing my views. It seemed relatively simple when Mr. Oraziotti brought this forward. I'm wrestling with this. It's federal. We know that Quebec did some work on this previously—Manitoba, Nova Scotia, I think Newfoundland was mentioned. Ontario is bringing this in kind of after the fact, after the federal government did jump into the fray. Nothing really happened with that private member's bill for a number of years. I'm concerned that if we go forward with this, to what extent are we duplicating the work of the federal government? We've seen that before with the environmental legislation; the Toxics Reduction Act, for example. Are we going to end up with a patchwork of legislation? And to what extent are we contributing to this kind of duplication?

We know the CRTC has introduced its final code for service providers. It comes into effect on December 2. Why would we still bring this proposed legislation forward when there will be a national code? We are told Bill 60 provides some protections beyond what's in the

national code. We've just got to bear in mind that the federal government does have the jurisdictional responsibility in the field of telecommunications; equally so, provinces have responsibility over contracts—we know that—and ensuring that wireless contracts are fair and transparent, as we've just heard.

The CRTC itself has apparently said that its national code can coexist with the provincial legislation, including the very similar legislation to this proposed legislation which is already in force in Quebec and some of the other provinces.

Again, we see the providers are challenging that federal legislation, as well. Are they going to challenge this legislation if there is duplication or some other problems?

We do know that Bell, Rogers and Telus are taking the CRTC to court, the Federal Court of Appeal. They filed a court motion seeking clarity, arguing the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission has no power to interfere with the rates for these pre-existing phone contracts. So we've got the big three in the cellphone business. They filed a motion on July 2 to delay new mobile guidelines. They say the CRTC's national code is set to come into final effect in June 2015, at which point about 20%, or five million, of their customers will still be under the three-year contracts, with some portion of the upfront device subsidy, the subsidy that entices buyers into lengthy terms, still unpaid.

That code takes effect on December 2, as I said. At that point, new three-year contracts will effectively be off limits because the code restricts the amortization period for paying off subsidies on handsets to no more than two years. But the carriers say they do not know what will happen to the remaining balances of these pre-existing three-year deals in June 2015—I hope you're absorbing all of this, Speaker; it's kind of complex stuff, in my view—and they're not sure whether those subscribers can simply walk away at that point. They object to the CRTC using legal terms to regulate existing contract terms retroactively, a power some say the Supreme Court has made clear that the commission does not have.

In early June, the CRTC announced the end of the three-year mobile phone contracts. They instituted a limit on roaming charges, which is something the province does not have power over, as I understand.

1620

Again, the changes allow Canadians to cancel their contracts after two years, cap charges at \$50 a month, international charges at \$100 a month. Again, all of this comes in on December 2. My question: Will the providers decide to challenge this Ontario legislation in the courts, perhaps on the grounds that it interferes with federal jurisdiction?

Speaker, in my office, I don't get complaints about cellphones or cellphone bills. I checked with my federal counterpart. She does not get complaints about cellphone bills. So we've checked. We do know that the ministry itself gets a lot of complaints. I can understand that. Some 80% of us have these cellphones.

I guess the most important thing to my mind, Speaker, as we continue to wade through this, is: It's very confus-

ing with the federal jurisdiction, and I really think we've got to stand back and just take a second look at this.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm pleased to add my voice to the debate. We've had a number of opportunities to discuss this, because it was introduced, and then the government was prorogued, and then it was introduced again. But, nevertheless, I'm happy to speak on it.

A couple of issues that actually the Conservative member raised—I think I'll address some of those in my preamble. One of the issues that people have brought up, and some of the deputations also from the providers—they raised a concern about whether or not this should be done provincially or whether it should be done federally. Who has jurisdiction?

I'll speak to the prioritization of this bill a little later on, but whether or not we should have done it at all: I think it's very clear that consumer protection is well within the provincial mandate. The fact that we can provide protection to the people of Ontario in the manner in which we see fit in this province and under this Legislature is fully within the ambit and the scope and the powers that we have. So consumer protection is absolutely something within the jurisdiction. We can do that. And if we can protect our consumers, why not? Why not add an extra layer of protection?

One of the other reasons, and the member brought it up, is that the CRTC code—I disagree with the Minister of Consumer Services that it's a voluntary code. I think it certainly is something that is binding on the providers, but it's being challenged in courts right now. So the protection that we should have from the CRTC may or may not be there, given the challenges brought forward by the providers.

Whether or not we need to have provincial protection—other provinces have it. Quebec, amongst others—Manitoba and other provinces. Manitoba is actually looking into it. Other provinces have already done it, like Quebec.

But my concern was the prioritization of this bill. I think there were a number of other important areas that we could have addressed first. Given that this is already being addressed to a degree in a federal context and it's being challenged in a federal context, we need to see what happens with that.

But things like the anti-SLAPP legislation—that's something that we need to bring forward right away. We need that protection immediately. That's democracy at its finest. The fact that people in our community who are simply doing their job; they're getting up and basically saying, "We don't like this project," or, "We have a problem with the way this is going on in our community": When they raise their concerns, whether it's on an environmental level or whether it's on a development level—simply by raising a concern, what happens, Madam Speaker, is that they get hit with a lawsuit, and that's a strategic lawsuit with absolutely no merit. The purpose of that lawsuit is simply to silence individuals.

To me, that is an absolute affront to democracy. We should encourage people to stand up for their communities, as opposed to discouraging them. To me, it's very disheartening that we haven't brought that legislation forward.

There has been a panel that has come forward and discussed this issue and has provided the recommendations. That has made its way into a bill, and we still haven't seen that bill presented before the House. So I would like to see that bill come forward.

The Public Works Protection Act: That bill was one of the key pieces to why G20, the worst civil liberties violation in the history of Ontario, occurred. A large part of why it occurred was because this act exists, this Public Works Protection Act. After so much attention from the media, from the public, so much public outrage—people were upset, people were offended, innocent people were kept in jail for two days partly because of this act—the government said, “Okay, we'll address this.” They brought forward a bill that would have gotten rid of the Public Works Protection Act and replaced it with a couple of other pieces of legislation. But where is that act? That's not before this House. That's something pressing. Civil liberties are very important; they are very pressing. With the Public Works Protection Act, that piece of legislation, still in effect, we could see another G20 happen again. This government is simply not discharging their duties. They should have brought that bill forward again and made sure that got passed through so that we would have rid ourselves of the Public Works Protection Act and ensured that the G20 and the civil liberty violations that occurred, the climate or the ability for that to happen was not there anymore. So I question the priority of this bill.

But the need of it—I've talked about how consumer protection is certainly within the power of the province and it's our duty and our obligation. We surely have to protect our consumers; that's for sure. In addition, though the member from the Conservative Party indicated that they haven't received any complaints regarding this issue, it's very clear that amongst consumer complaints this was a significant issue. The Commissioner for Complaints for Telecommunications Services received 8,007 complaints in the year 2010-11. It's important to look to the trend. That was a 114% increase. The Minister of Consumer Services indicated that it was a 200% increase in complaints at another reporting agency.

It's clear that people are upset with their cellphone coverage. They're upset with the wireless plans that exist. They're upset with the pricing. In fact, what people are really concerned with, consumers tell me all the time, is that the cellphone wireless agreements or plans in Ontario are simply too expensive. When it comes to wireless services, we're paying some of the highest rates in the world. We have some of the most expensive plans when it comes to voice and data. It simply just doesn't make sense if we compare ourselves to other countries. There are countries that are the same size, if not smaller—Scandinavian countries—which have much

more affordable rates. That's an issue that people are concerned about. This bill doesn't address the affordability piece. That's simply still an issue that exists.

But that being said, people are certainly concerned with disclosure, transparency of contracts and simply having the knowledge about what's going on with their bills. That's something that's absolutely important, and I support that initiative. Because people approach me all the time saying, “I want to get out of my contract. How do I get out of it? What is it going to cost me?” I remember I was in a situation where I saw a better deal and I saw a better phone, in my university days and law school days. I simply didn't know how to get out of my contract, and I was in law school. I thought, “How can I get out of this?” It's certainly something that people are concerned with. Having clear disclosure of the contract details, knowing exactly what it takes to get out of your contract is something that makes sense. It's something that should be done. I'm happy that we're taking steps to address that.

The overall idea in terms of protection: How can we protect our consumers? How does this bill protect our consumers? One is that you need to know what you're getting into, so if the language of the contract is clear, you're more likely to be able to understand it.

Now, let's just step back from wireless. In general, why aren't our contracts clear? Why does it seem that any time we have a contract for any sort of transaction, the language in it has to be difficult to understand? That seems to be a prerequisite: that it's not a contract unless you can't understand it. “Okay, now you can't understand it? Then it's a contract. Now let's sign it.” That approach is something that is not a very appropriate approach. It doesn't make a lot of sense, and it's not doing anyone a service.

Really, if you can hide and disguise the true cost of a contract and use subterfuge to get people to enter into a contract, you're not doing anyone a service. If you're a provider and you're doing this, this is my message to all providers: Don't do it. Because if you create contracts that are hard to understand and you trick consumers into agreeing to sign them, what you're doing is you're ruining your reputation, and you're ruining the reputation of the entire industry, whatever industry that may be.

I'm glad that we're taking that step in this respect, where it comes to wireless agreements, but I think we need to step back from wireless agreements and just look at contracts generally. All contracts need to be written in a legible manner, in an understandable manner, need to be in clear and regular language so that the concept of “legalese,” which is its own language altogether, or legal language that distorts or confuses what the intention of the contract is—we need to do away with that, particularly when it comes to contracts between a provider of a service and an everyday consumer. If it's between two entities who are both well-versed in the law, that's a different matter altogether. If it's between two corporations and there are corporate lawyers on both sides, they're on equal footing—absolutely no problem. It just seems to

me that it would be common sense that all of our contracts should be easy to understand, in simple and straightforward language. But I'm glad we're putting that into this bill.

1630

One of the things that I think is encouraging about this bill—and it's now in third reading, and we're debating it in the House—and I've talked about this before, is that the driving force behind this bill was complaints. Ideally, I would like to see a government that doesn't react to problems and anticipates those problems before they occur. That would be the ultimate form of leadership. While that's lacking here—we didn't lead the way because other provinces addressed this issue before us. I think it's fair to say that the Liberal government does take blame for that, because they were a majority government and they had nine years to do this, and they didn't take those steps. There was a lack of leadership or a lack of proactive work in that respect, but in fairness, they have taken the step now, and I'm encouraged by the fact that consumer complaints drove this legislation.

It's an alternative form of democracy. We think that democracy is only the idea that you can vote when its election time, that you can use your right to vote to select the candidate who would represent your concerns for your community. But the fact that the high volume of complaints when it comes to wireless agreements drove the government, pushed the government to take this step is encouraging because it shows our community, it shows our constituents, it shows the people of Ontario that your complaints actually matter and that if you complain about something, you may get a result. The message I want to send to everyone is to continue complaining. If you don't like something with whatever service it may be, whether it's with any consumer service-related issue or any ministry-related issue or any issue whatsoever in your communities, complain about it. Find out who you can complain to, whether it's the Ombudsman—if it's something that falls within the Ombudsman's gamut.

The Ombudsman of Ontario does wonderful work, has taken issues that have received very little coverage or very little attention and, through the work of people like the people in our constituencies, like the people of Ontario, taken the concerns of the people and then gone on to do wonderful investigative work to expose issues when it comes to police accountability and the issues around the SIU and the legislation that protects us as Ontarians and provides us with the safety or the security of knowing that there is a special investigations unit that will investigate any case where there's wrongdoing by the police. That's something that the Ombudsman went out and investigated. When it comes to the way we treat our developmentally challenged youth and members of our community, the Ombudsman went out to find how those folks were being treated and looked at the ways we could improve that.

The point is that one way to exercise your democracy is to vote, but the other way we've seen is to complain. I encourage you to complain, because the complaints are

one of the large reasons why this bill is before the House right now. It's your complaints that did this, and I encourage you to continue doing that.

When this bill was in this House, was brought before the House and rolled into something we called a programming motion, and there was time allocation that was voted on, we disagreed with it as the NDP, and I can understand why. Let me just take a minute to explain the process. There was a programming motion that took a number of bills, rolled them together and allocated a time, a deadline, for how long those bills could be debated and then brought into committee, and then it put a limit on how long they could be in committee for and how quickly they had to be amended and then brought back to this House.

On the surface, there doesn't seem to be anything wrong with that; it's just setting deadlines. The problem with that bill—and I've seen it first-hand—was, one, we had two days of committee hearings. At the end of the second day, there was a community organization that came forward, and they had a very legitimate concern. They said, "There's an entire issue that your bill does not touch upon at all." I didn't know about this. I hadn't turned my mind to it either. The community group basically said, "What are you doing about prepaid plans?" We're dealing with postpaid plans—you know, you receive a bill and then, when your bill comes forward, you look at what you owe and then you pay for that amount. But what about when you pay for a service—you get a \$50 SIM card and you put \$50 on that card—and that's your credit, so you have \$50 of credit?

Well, what's happening is that cellphone companies are basically causing or allowing those to expire. You could have paid for \$50 of service and, if you don't use that service within a certain period of time, that entire \$50 is gone and they go back to the cellphone provider.

Pensioners came forward and said, "Listen, as a pensioner, I'm on a fixed income. If I put a certain amount of money into my phone and I pay for that, I pay for it because I don't really understand how to use cellphones and I'd rather use my land line at home. But when I'm travelling out and about, there are no longer any pay phones anymore. It's not an option, so if I have an emergency and I need to pull over, or if I'm at a gas station and I want to make a phone call, you actually can't find pay phones anymore. They're very, very rare."

So, out of necessity, some seniors are using or buying cellphones, because they realize that it might be a safety mechanism—that if they're travelling somewhere, they might need to contact someone—but what's happening is, if they buy that cellphone and they want to find the most affordable way possible, they get a very affordable handset and they put a certain amount of credits onto that phone. So they put a \$50 credit on the phone. What happens is that if they don't use that phone within a certain period of time, they lose the entire \$50. That just seems to be inherently unfair.

The other thing that's even more unfair which came forward was, say you have your \$50 and you're using

your phone regularly. Some companies, some providers, require you to do a top-up. That means you have to pay a couple of dollars, maybe \$10 a month, just to keep that prepaid service going. If you miss that—so, you already have an amount in there; you're using your phone regularly, maybe a couple of times a week, whenever you need to. You're using your phone—it's not like you're not using it—you have money in it, but you miss the top-up date. You just miss it by a couple of days. Technically, what's happening is, if you miss that top-up date, the wireless company says your amount is forfeit, and the leftover amount of money—that cash that's left over—goes back to the cellphone provider.

That seems absolutely unfair and very problematic. The problem with the process—why I bring this up—is that this issue was brought up at the end of the day, on the last day of hearings. By the time we were wrapped up, it was 6 o'clock. The deadline for amendments was the next day at 12 p.m. sharp, so that only gave anyone who wanted to make an amendment on this issue from 6 p.m. Well, the Legislative Assembly lawyers, their office was closed at that time. I'm shedding no umbrage on the legislative lawyers; their day was done at 6 p.m. The next day, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., you could submit your bill, make sure it made sense and make sure it achieved what you wanted, and if it didn't make it in by lunch, by 12 p.m. in the afternoon, the amendment didn't come in.

Well, many amendments didn't make it in because of that deadline. The other issue that came forward was that during the committee, while we were actually going clause by clause, the Liberals had made an amendment to address a particular issue in the bill which seemed to be a problem. They made an amendment, and then the Conservatives made another amendment. When looking at both amendments, it turned out that both amendments were actually wrong. They didn't address the issue, and it wasn't a partisan issue; it was just an issue that didn't make full sense.

The protection that we want to confer upon Ontarians is that if you buy a product in Ontario, you should be protected by Ontario law. But, if you live in Ontario but are buying a product in the Yukon, you shouldn't force the Yukon to apply Ontario laws. Not only that, I don't think it's legal. I don't think it would be legally binding that if you live in Ontario and you buy something in the Yukon, you could force consumer protection that is Ontario-based on a company in the Yukon.

Well, the way the law was written, it said that if either party, whether you're the person selling the product or the person receiving the product, lived in Ontario, they would have to be protected by this law, but that just didn't make sense, because, like I said, if you live in Ontario but you were buying a product in another province, you shouldn't be covered, really. And what if you were from another country? You're from France and you come to Ontario and you want to buy a product in Ontario for the time that you're here. You're on a temporary job; your residence is still in France, but you're here.

1640

So we tried to address this issue, but it turned out that because this bill was time-allocated and we only had until the end of that day to get it done, we had to go with a clause that didn't make as much sense as it could have. We had to rely on an inferior piece or section in that legislation where we could have come up with something better if it wasn't time-allocated. We could have all agreed to say, "Listen, we need an amendment to this and we need a little bit more time, we can agree as a committee." It wasn't a partisan issue. It offended me that democracy wasn't well served on that day, on that one piece, albeit it wasn't a significant or a major component of the legislation. It just seemed to me that the process was flawed when we all agreed that there needed to be an amendment but it couldn't be done. That's why I realized the flaws with time-allocating and requiring it to be rammed through in a certain way, particularly where there are areas where we need amendments. If there weren't any amendments needed, it wouldn't have been an issue, but in this case it was.

Turning back to the prepaid issue, one of the issues around prepaid protection is that we come into that territory of, does it fall provincially or does it fall federally? Albeit it's a bit of a grey area, we actually have legislation about gift cards. The same issue came up. People were concerned that if they bought a gift card for someone, it would expire. That seems to be completely unfair. You've paid the money and it's not as good as cash, so what was the purpose of buying a gift card then? You might as well have given your friend cash. It's undermining the entire purpose of the gift, and why should the company be unjustly enriched just because the person didn't go out and use that gift card? There could be other ways of verifying if it's legitimate or not, but simply putting an expiry date on it makes no sense.

We actually introduced legislation—the province has legislation—that deems that gift cards cannot expire. That similar type of approach should apply to prepaid plans. If gift cards don't expire, prepaid plans shouldn't expire either. That money should either be reimbursed to the individual or that prepaid card should be honoured. We've solved that problem when it comes to gift cards, though there is a challenge to that legislation that's in the courts right now. But we've taken the step and I think we need to do that step as well for prepaid plans.

One of the unique elements of this bill, and I have to give the minister credit for this, is that the bill—we see all too often that we have bills or legislation in this House that give us protection. Much like we've complained about the caregiver leave that this government brought forward in the past, the issue that people kept on bringing up, and members in this House brought up, was that you can give someone a right, but if you don't enforce it, what good does that right do? So I challenge this government. You've created this right that people can take a leave if their loved one is ill or if they're seriously injured or if there has been a death in the family, that you can take time off to take care of your loved ones and to

sort out your family obligations—which is a great concept—but if there is no enforcement, then how can someone have any confidence that if they use that right given, they won't suffer any consequence for it, if there is no enforcement for that?

Normally, a bill or a law has very little benefit if there is no enforcement, if there's no protection, if there's no guarantee that the rights conferred by that bill will actually be followed through on, but in this bill I think that there is a unique element—and I think that this is something that we should look at in other bills moving forward—in that there's actually a strong remedy. The remedy is that if you are charged unduly, if when you cancel your contract the cellphone company charges you too high of a fee, then you can actually sue the company for three times the amount you are owed. The reason for that, I suspect, is that if the amount is something like \$100 or maybe \$80, you might weigh the benefit of going through Small Claims Court—and maybe your daily salary is in that range, between \$80 to \$100—when you have to take off a day of work just to go in and fight a court case to get back the same amount. It really doesn't make a lot of sense and it may not be worth your while, but if you triple that amount—so if you're owed \$100 and then this legislation allows you to sue for triple that amount, so you can actually sue for \$300, then you might think, "Hey, that's worth it. I might be able to take a day off of work to fight a case where I know that I will get \$300. That might make some sense."

I applaud that initiative and I would like to see that concept in all of our bills, that there should be a strong remedy, that if we confer a right, if we give you a right, we give you the ability to do something, there has also got to be in the bill a way for you to enforce that right or remedy if someone doesn't give you that right. In this case, the remedy is that you get to sue the company. That makes great sense and that gives a strong incentive to the consumer, but it also encourages the provider to say, "Maybe I shouldn't not provide this right or maybe I shouldn't be hesitant to provide a refund when I know I should because I can get sued for triple the amount, and if a number of people do that, that's going to be a significant cost." That makes some sense, and I support that and I think that's a unique element of the bill, having that remedy built in. We need to see more of those types of bills that actually provide for a remedy.

Just to put a little bit of context, where we stand right now in Canada where it comes to cellphone protection, like I said, the Liberals didn't provide leadership. Other provinces led the way when it came to cellphone protection, wireless protection. You can fault them for that. But, in fairness, other provinces have this protection.

The CRTC has a code. I submit that it's actually something that's going to be binding on companies, but it's being challenged in court. Though it actually supercedes us in jurisdiction on many of the issues, having two bills can work, and they can coexist. If anyone has a doubt about that, there can be two bills. We can have a federal code and a provincial legislation that can coexist.

We've done our best, I think, in committee to make sure that the bills don't conflict with each other.

In cases where they conflict, it's a constitutional matter. People have brought up this issue: "What do we do? Is this provincial, federal, these different issues?" We have volumes and volumes of books written on this issue of constitutionality. We don't need to weigh into that. There is already significant case law that talks about that. We know that the province can do certain things, and we shouldn't be afraid to do that. If we can provide protection for consumers, why should we hesitate to do that? We know that the federal government has certain jurisdiction over issues. As to who has jurisdiction over what, we can sort that out; there's enough case law that gives us guidance in that area. If anyone brings up the concern that it's not constitutional or "Why are we doing this when the federal government has done it?", we have jurisdiction and we can certainly figure out where our jurisdiction ends and the federal government begins.

Just looking at some of the concerns that have come up—price gouging and restrictive contracts—that's something that the minister brought up as complaints that people have mentioned and it's something that I've heard about again and again. For price gouging and restrictive contracts—we're not addressing the price gouging, and I have to stress that because that is a significant issue. That's a major issue. If you look at the province of Ontario, there are essentially three major providers. They're the big three: We have Telus, we have Bell and we have Rogers. Amongst the three of them, the perception from the public is—I'm not claiming that I know the answer to this—that there seems to be collusion going on here. With three major providers, there isn't very much competition going on, and our rates aren't really coming down. If we had more competition, the rates may come down. That's what people are concerned about. People are genuinely concerned: Why is it that we're paying such high rates when, if you just drive south of the border, it's completely different? People say, "Oh, south of the border, they have more people." Look at Finland, look at Sweden, look at Norway: countries that are smaller than Canada in population, similarly large and vast, and they have much lower rates than ours.

What are we doing about making the rates more affordable? The reason why I bring this up is—and I've talked about this before and I think it's important to get our heads around this—right now in our society, we've seen a pretty big shift. We've seen a time before there existed any sort of Internet and then Internet was something of a novelty, something you could use for entertainment, to the point that now the Internet is almost something we can consider an essential service. Many government services that this government offers are offered through the Internet. If you want to check on your OSAP or apply for OSAP, which is your funding as a university student to be able to get through school; if you want to renew your licence plates; if you want to do a whole host of government-related services, you can do those online.

1650

When it comes to researching, if you want to talk about the democratization of knowledge, the Internet has been one of the strongest forces for allowing everybody in the world to have access to knowledge. Who has access to the Internet? That's the question. If we accept that the Internet is now no longer just an entertainment source but is actually a fundamental or an essential service, then our access to that fundamental service has to be affordable. It has to be something that everyone can access if we want to have a fair society. We need to be able to access the Internet.

What studies have shown now is that not only are 77% of Canadians using wireless communications, using their cellphones; they found that a growing trend across the world—not just in Canada, but the growing trend—is that the primary vehicle, the primary way that people access the Internet is becoming their cellphones. That's that primary way that people use the Internet. If the primary way to use the Internet is your cellphone, and if we accept that the Internet is now an essential service, then we have a duty to make sure that our wireless data is affordable, because if that's the way for people to have equal access to services, we have to make sure that access is actually affordable.

That's an area where I think we need to do more work. If our data plans are so expensive and cost-prohibitive that people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds can't afford data on their cellphones, and cellphones are the major way that people are accessing the Internet, then we are doing a disservice to those folks if we don't address the fact that wireless plans are so expensive. It's becoming more of an issue of social justice than simply an affordability piece because it's access of something that's so important. That's something I want to turn our minds to and that I think we need to look at. Moving forward, what we can do as a province or what we can do as a country to make sure this service is more affordable we'll have to certainly look at and address in the days, months, years to come.

In summary, this bill provides some areas of protection that are well-needed. It provides something that I think all contracts should have: clear and transparent language. If that language isn't clear or transparent—this is another remedy which is quite strong. If you don't have clear and transparent language which you ought to have, you can cancel that contract within a year and be refunded your entire cost. That's a strong remedy, and it makes sense. The provider has to make sure the contract is clear, legible and understandable. I assume it will be legible; hopefully, it's understandable too.

The unique element of the bill—and I think it's something we need to move forward with—is that not only do we have a bill that gives a protection or a right, it also gives you the remedy mixed in.

When it comes to the most difficult part of cellphone or wireless agreements outside of the actual cost, it's the lack of clarity or the confusion around the contract. That's an area that's been addressed, and I'm happy that it's been addressed.

There was one last thing I wanted to talk about, which was the total cost, the all-in pricing. There was some concern that the all-in pricing isn't something that we're used to. Normally, you're used to finding out what your bill costs per month. The idea was that if you provide a two-year, all-in cost, people aren't going to get it. They're going to look at it and say, "What is that? I don't understand what that is." But what's important to note is that people don't realize that when we sign a contract, often what we think is that we're getting something for free. We're getting a cellphone for free if we sign a contract. Really, what's actually happening and what you don't see unless you look at the full, all-in pricing is, you're actually paying for that cellphone. You're just paying for it over a period of time. It's important to know: Are you actually paying more than the cellphone is worth or are you paying just what it's worth?

If it turns out that all-in pricing shows you that over two years you're paying twice the cost of the actual cellphone, you might rethink and say, "Listen, it's not worth me signing a contract, then." That might encourage providers to provide a better deal and you might be able to shop around a bit better. You might be able to look: "Okay, this company here is providing an all-in pricing of this, so I know they're giving me a bit of a hook-up on the cellphone price, but this company isn't, so they're actually costing me more. It's not really a savings."

That's important. It's a good way of looking at it. In fact, I think it might educate consumers. If you look at your two-year cost, you can see, "This is how I have to budget. This is what I have to budget for. This cellphone's going to cost me this much money. Maybe I can do with some other form—maybe a lower plan. Maybe I can do without all the bells and whistles on this particular cellphone plan." I think that's an effective thing that's going to help consumers out, certainly.

So, in all, it's a bill that's certainly supportable, and we anticipate supporting the bill when it comes to the actual vote. I thank you for taking this step to protect our consumers.

I, again, have to leave a last-minute plug. This is my opportunity to talk, and I have six minutes. I'm not going to use all six minutes for this last-minute plug, but I encourage the government that this bill is going to wrap up, and we want to see the next pieces of legislation coming forward.

I implore you, let's prioritize two things in those upcoming bills: the anti-SLAPP legislation, which is so important, so invaluable. It's so important when it comes to the protection of our democratic freedoms, our ability to have dissent. Dissent is the hallmark of society, and if you can't dissent, if you can't disagree with what's going on in our society, then we are really in trouble.

When people are in our community, people who are taking the step to complain about something, to raise awareness about something, to say that we don't agree with this particular project or we don't agree with this particular action that's going on—if those people are silenced by strategic lawsuits, and we don't protect them,

we are doing a great disservice to democracy. If we don't take the step—instead of discouraging those folks, we encourage them. We want more people like that to come forward. If we're not taking that step, then we are doing a great disservice as legislators.

So I implore you, as the government, to please take the initiative to bring that legislation forward. We've seen it presented. There has been a task force. There has been a panel. The recommendations are all in the legislation. We need that to come forward. That's a priority.

The second priority is—the G20 fiasco, no exaggeration, was one of the worst civil liberty violations in the history of our country, in the history of this province. One of the key contributors to that violation, or that civil liberties violation, was the fact that the Public Works Protection Act existed. Many people have come forward and stated that that was the reason—that was one of the reasons that that allowed for certain powers that abrogated our rights.

The government took the right step. They took a long time to do it, and they made a mistake of having it in the first place, but they took the right step, saying, "Listen, we will get rid of the Public Works Protection Act"—good; I appreciate that—"and replace it with a number of other legislations." There were some problems with those as well, but it was the right first step.

But where is that bill now? In prorogation, it was killed. It was killed on the order paper. We want to see that bill brought forward again because it does a disservice to the folks who were detained. Their civil liberties were taken away. There were 1,000 people arrested; 800 of those were kept in custody for two days and released with absolutely no charges laid whatsoever. If the Public Works Protection Act didn't exist, many of those violations couldn't have occurred.

So I implore you again, in your priorities moving forward, after this programming motion is completed, bring forward the Public Works Protection Act—the bill that would remove that and replace with it with our court security act, an act governing the security around electricity-producing facilities. Bring that forward, and then we can talk about making our province safer and a place that protects our civil liberties and a place that encourages democracy, encourages public speech. Those are some of the priorities we need to bring forward in this House, and I encourage you to do so.

Thank you very much. It was a pleasure to speak to you all.

The Honourable Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'm pleased to offer my remarks on Bill 60 as it comes before this House for its third reading.

I have followed the wireless consumer protection file with great interest since my election. As we come to the conclusion of a three-year saga, I can only look back at the previous sessions of the Legislature and see the opportunities that this government has missed.

It was a pleasure to rise in the chamber to debate Bill 82, this bill's predecessor. It was also a pleasure to see, in

the last session, Bill 5, under the name of the member from Sault Ste. Marie, clear second reading and go to committee.

Wireless consumer protection legislation has been before this Legislature four times, and yet three times the government allowed the legislation to die on the order paper. The latest setback was the prorogation back in October 2012. When the political interest of the Liberal Party is involved, consumers are quickly forgotten on that side of the House.

1700

Since 2010, the wireless industry has changed. More players, both subsidiary and independent, have entered the market, and although the majority of the infrastructure is owned and rented out by the big three suppliers, we have seen positive developments in the services and plans offered to consumers. For instance, in the larger urban centres, where the lion's share of the consumer base lies, the big three are under intense pressure to offer more data, shorter terms, and to do away with roaming and long-distance charges. Today, in 2013, we see unlimited data, unlimited minutes and Canada-wide calling offered by more and more carriers, sometimes as a baseline standard. We have seen many calls for more competition in the wireless sector, and we hope to see the federal government take action in this regard soon. A more open market will result in downward pressure on prices, which every consumer will always welcome.

Wireless technology has permeated every aspect of our lives. More than three quarters of Ontarians are wireless consumers, and many households have forgone their land lines altogether and are entirely mobile. Considering this evolution of the wireless market, and following the passage of certain legislation in other provinces dealing with wireless contracts, the CRTC issued a mandatory code which will come into effect December 2. Under that code, all provisions of Bill 60 are covered, and more. The provinces enjoy a wide variety of powers, including the power to regulate contracts within their own borders. Sometimes, however, this power clashes with federal jurisdictions, such as with telecoms.

Under the spin and intent of this legislation, if it affects the way in which wireless providers do business in a significant way, there is a persuasive argument to be made that such legislation is not within this province's power.

Quebec passed its flagship consumer legislation, coincidentally also titled Bill 60, in 2010. This was allowed by the CRTC, as it hadn't enacted a federal code yet. Quebec is to be praised for that initiative, since it brought about a paradigm shift for both wireless companies and the consumers. Quebec's law established the gold standard for calculating cancellation fees, significantly reducing the financial consequences of cancelling a contract and opening doors for greater competition. Moreover, Quebec's provisions regarding cancellations were applied voluntarily by companies such as Rogers to consumers across Canada, without the need for regulation.

That was in 2010. Today's situation, however, is radically different. The CRTC has acted by addressing cancellation fees, contract disclosures, roaming charges, over-usage charges, trial periods and other matters. The matter of wireless regulation has been settled at the federal level, and the provinces must therefore defer to federal institutions.

Back when I led off the debate on Bill 82, I highlighted how it introduced and called for a debate coinciding with the action being taken by the CRTC and called it the "me too act." Seeing how this bill addresses issues already covered by the CRTC, I can only christen the bill "the wait for me act." Let's face it. The Liberals missed the train on wireless consumer protection in 2011. Back then, Bill 5 received second reading in December and was referred to committee. Because of the government's stubborn reluctance to establish committees, the bill languished there without being examined. Then, in one of the most baffling and unnecessary procedural moves in the last session, the then Minister of Consumer Services introduced her own version of the wireless bill in the House, thereby killing whatever was on the committee's docket on the subject. The bill, Bill 82, died upon prorogation. This bill, we saw, is the resurrection of Bill 82 as Bill 60, with the CRTC already in the final stages of drafting a national code. By the time we began debate on this bill, the final version of the code had already been approved.

Let's dispel some of the myths. Bill 60 will do nothing for roaming charges and over-usage charges. These are exclusively federal, and the CRTC had capped them. Bill 60 will do nothing regarding customer service standards either, as they were never contemplated in the drafting of this legislation. If Bill 60 were just a plagiarized version of the national code or even Quebec's Bill 60, we wouldn't be having this discussion. Even if the government didn't want to steal our own jobs plan, they could be excused for copying and pasting a federal code and claiming it was their own. The trouble is that Bill 60 is not a carbon copy of the national code. Its spirit and intent is "me too, but more." This has been a costly mistake.

The government should be made to do what's in the public's best interest. We highlighted the need for amendments and improvements to this bill, especially because several of its sections would have put it in direct conflict with the CRTC's national code. However, in their zeal to pretend to be the consumer's best advocate, the government insisted on pretending Ontario has universal jurisdiction over the rest of Canada.

In section 3 of the bill as it stands, whoever enters into a wireless contract in Ontario or with a company located in Ontario is covered under the act. The silliness of the latter part is easy to see. A consumer located in another province, who might never have been to Ontario in their lifetime, who enters into a contract with an Ontario-headquartered wireless company or a call centre located in Ontario falls under this province's contract law. This government has been warned by several major providers

that this restriction may force them to move their call centres, and it becomes another barrier to jobs in Ontario.

Through you Speaker, I would like to ask the government a very simple question: What right do they have to poke their fingers into other provinces' business and constituents? Will they, for example, extend the same courtesy to Alberta's Legislative Assembly, regulating how Alberta companies do business in Ontario's natural resources industry?

The amendment filed by the government to deal with this ridiculous inconsistency makes the law even more surreal. Under Bill 60, as amended, the Ontario Minister of Consumer Services will determine by regulation which provinces offer, in her opinion, sufficient consumer protection and to whose consumers therefore Bill 60 will not apply. This power to attempt to meddle in other provinces' business is given to the same Ministry of Consumer Services that has been shown by the Auditor General in 2009 to be incapable of either making Ontarians aware of their mandate or to force compliance by repeat offenders.

Moreover, the same Ministry of Consumer Services that can't answer some of the simple questions that I've submitted to them almost six months ago—for instance, I asked, "Will the minister provide the details on any or all consumer satisfaction surveys it carried out as a result of the Auditor General's 2009 recommendations?" It's simple enough to answer. This ministry as yet cannot keep its own house in order and expects to tell other provinces how to keep theirs.

I will expound as well on the issue of early warnings. Consumers across Canada have good reason to fret about their data usage, especially with the increasing use of smart phones that exchange data on an almost consistent basis. We have heard several instances of consumers being billed hundreds, if not thousands of dollars, for roaming usage and over-usage of data at home. The CRTC acted and from December 2, over-usage will be capped.

When a Canadian phone roams abroad, we already receive welcome messages from the host supply carrier, and usually a warning message from the Canadian carrier that extra charges will apply. What happens in roaming, by necessity, is a federal matter.

With regard to monitoring data, voice and text usage on a routine basis, in order to avoid over-usage charges, the application market has provided consumers with a vast choice of free and cheap apps that can monitor and record the amount of data, voice and text messages used within a particular time period. Many of these will warn the user when they approach their monthly limit. The CRTC has acknowledged this development, driven entirely by the private sector. National codes outline that carriers must disclose to the consumer, when they enter into a contract, the means with which they can monitor their usage.

Common sense and efficiency are, naturally, lost on this government. Instead of making use of the resources already provided, they blaze a trail to nowhere by giving

themselves the power to force, by regulation, all carriers to develop and install an entirely new early-warning system.

Speaker, I want to leave some time for my other colleagues to speak on this. A deal is a deal, and we will be supporting this, but we think that the stark warning—proclaiming and enforcing this bill, we will only find ourselves in the courts. Thank you, and I turn this over.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: It is a pleasure to join the debate here this afternoon and just to echo the comments from our member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, who's our outgoing consumer services critic. He has been doing a good job on this file along with me for the last several years that we have been talking about this.

1710

A deal is a deal on this side of the House. When we agree that we're going to do something here, with the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, then we're going to follow through with that, unlike what we witnessed here earlier this morning on Bill 74, where the government didn't know if they were coming or going. They have had four different positions on that bill in the last two weeks. It's been hard to follow exactly where this government is going.

But I'm happy to stand here today and say, that as a member of the Ontario PC caucus, we are going to stand by our deal and pass this bill, even though it's not necessarily in the best interests of the province of Ontario, as my colleague just pointed out, because it could create a whole web of legal trouble for us down the road. However, we've agreed to this bill and we're going to support it—begrudgingly, I must say, Madam Speaker.

The reason that we're doing this and the reason that we are supporting this bill is because we believe that this government has been putting out all these bills that are taking us nowhere, when this province is staggering and drowning in debt and multi-billion dollar deficits year after year—there are hundreds of thousands of people in the province who don't have a job. We felt that it was important, on this side of the House, to clear the decks, to get these bills out of the way, these bills that were dealing with a certain issue in the province but not necessarily the big issue in the province. So we decided that we would enter into this agreement, pass these bills, and then we could see what the real legislative agenda is for the government going forward when it comes to jobs and the economy in the province of Ontario, something that this government has yet to show us. But we are going to be supporting this bill at third reading.

It is worth noting, though, that there has been a failure in this process. All the time in this House, members get to their feet and talk about how a bill can be improved at committee. You hear it all the time: "This bill isn't a perfect bill, but it can be improved at committee." Well, this is an example of how you can create a Frankenstein when you go to committee. This bill has been amended, and not in a good way, from what we agreed to on the

floor of the House. Three amendments were made in committee that are particularly asinine. Let me point out what those amendments are that were made in committee.

First of all, because of the amendments that were made to section 3, this bill now not only covers residents of Ontario when it comes to wireless transactions, but it's now including any consumer using the services of a company that does business in Ontario. That means that the government of Ontario is now trying to regulate customers outside the province of Ontario. Given the fact that we just got a new CRTC code governing wireless transactions from coast to coast, this isn't just ridiculous, it's redundant.

Second, the total contract cost: On the surface, there's not really any problem with this. We are all for including the cost of data and phone subsidies, voice mail, texting, calling and everything else in the monthly price; that's not a bad thing. But here's the key: It's the monthly price. The amendments for section 8 don't create the all-inclusive price on a monthly basis, just the total contract cost—that's the total cost. So at some point, advertising for a cellphone in Ontario is going to go from about \$60 a month, which it is now, to potentially advertising \$1,200 for a phone. If the government thinks that it's getting consumer complaints now about wireless, well they ain't seen nothing yet, Madam Speaker, because when you start advertising those kinds of prices, you're going to hear all kinds of complaints from cellphone and wireless consumers. They just went from being able to afford a phone for 60 bucks a month to now paying \$1,200.

Then there's the amendment to section 13. That just shows a fundamental lack of understanding of how a business works. But quite honestly, what would we expect from the members on the other side—in this government—and also their enablers to my far left?

So, yes, most of the time when we say that a bill is going to committee, we are expecting to see improved legislation coming out. We turn bills with potential into laws that will actually make a positive difference for the people of Ontario. But Bill 60, which we are debating here this afternoon, is an example of how the process can actually turn a bill with potential into a potential disaster for the province legally.

Let's clear the decks, because you know what, Madam Speaker? We said we were going to clear the decks, and we are the party that actually keeps its word over here. We're going to clear the decks, we're going to allow the government to show us what they have coming out in new legislation that is going to try to get this province back on the right track. I don't know if we're ever going to see it, but we have this much faith left that maybe they actually do have a plan on turning around the economy of Ontario, getting our unemployed back to work, creating a robust economy here in the province that once was the leader in Confederation. Now we're a have-not province. It's completely unacceptable. But we've agreed to clear the decks and get this off the order paper so that this

government actually has to deal with the economy instead of continuously ignoring it, Madam Speaker.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 60 this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to speak on Bill 60 on such short notice. I'm going to give some accommodation to Minister MacCharles, who's actually from Durham. Certainly she's made mistakes in her life, and she's a Liberal, but nonetheless she's a very compassionate person. I appreciate her interest here in protecting the consumers of Ontario. Who wouldn't?

If you look at the bill, I think it's important, Madam Speaker, through you, in the limited time I have, to put a bit of a frame around how we got to where we are today. You have to go back to October 3. We're dealing with a program motion. Really, that's a treacherous term for time-allocating, truncating the democratic process technically. I'm going to move to a higher level here and talk about—we have 40 minutes, and I have been limited to 12 minutes when in fact I could use an hour.

Mr. Todd Smith: We wish you had an hour.

Mr. John O'Toole: A lot of people would say that they've heard quite enough. Nonetheless, I think it's important that the viewer know—and how about a little respect for them, because this bill purports to do something—and as our member from Prince Edward-Hastings just said, our word is our bond. That's a very good way to always think. When you think of Tim Hudak, think of a person who keeps his word, and that's exactly what the member for Prince Edward-Hastings was talking about.

We know this program motion—and he described this for the viewers.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: This is not for the members here who are making noise.

Actually, we want to have a report from Premier Wynne on the jobs and the economy. I look around in my riding and I see people out of work; they can't afford their electricity bills. I don't want to go down that road. I'm just saying that we all recognize that there's a problem. We know there's a problem.

Now, this bill, along with a number of bills—and the public should know this. This program motion—we bundled and, as he said, cleared the decks. What I mean by clear the decks is, we bundled a number of bills that we felt we had some support for, that should go to committee to be improved, and we would give them quick resolution. Shall we put it that way?

Some of the bills are in fact a success, where we came together, for example, on Bill 30, the Skin Cancer Prevention Act (Tanning Beds). We just met with the cancer society this morning. Many members were there at the breakfast where they celebrated this victory. I want to give France Gélinas, the critic for the NDP, full credit. At the same time, I want to give our critic Christine

Elliott, as well as the Minister of Health, Deb Matthews, full credit. We celebrated by coming together to do the right thing at the right time in an expedient fashion. I think it will help young people under age 18. That bill is just one of the bills that was put together under our leader, Tim Hudak, to say—the term which I don't particularly agree with is “clearing the decks”; I think it's moving forward. Of course, that sounds so much like Premier McGuinty—“moving forward.” I think I'll go with “clear the decks.”

Bill 70 is the Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act, which our member from Leeds-Grenville, Steve Clark, brought in. It's a small housekeeping type of issue, but nonetheless he had professions, dentists and naturopaths and chiropractors and all the other people who aren't particularly covered—to allow them to perform some kind of medical procedure—a controlled act is really what it is—on their spouse. But it's not just a free gimme. The individual would have to receive permission from their regulatory college. That again is a case where our member put forward a very good idea and, out of due respect, the government saw fit to include that in this program motion.

1720

Bill 55 is a bill that's in this motion as well, the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act. There's a bill for the door-to-door salesmen types. The hot water rentals and all these kinds of things were bundled up and put in there—consumer protection again. Minister MacCharles was there.

Another good bill, Bill 36, the Local Food Act, I think is going to be dealt with tomorrow. I think that our critic Ernie Hardeman is pushing, along with Bob Bailey, the member from Sarnia-Lambton. Another one of his ideas has found its way by working together to improve the outcomes for Ontarians.

That's under the leadership of Tim Hudak. This is real action taking place because of our leadership, really, in trying to deal with it and get on to jobs and the economy. That's where we want to get. They have no plan. That's even been the whole theme of question period here over the last couple of days.

Another bill is Bill 74, the Fairness and Competitiveness in Ontario's Construction Industry Act. That bill was voted on today—quite a treacherous piece. This was part of this motion, the agreement, the things that go on here. Now, what happened today? Kathleen wasn't here. I don't think I'm supposed to say that, so I won't. The fact is, though, that's a vote where she was yes, no, maybe, no. Well, she wasn't here; it was a non-vote. I—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I have to remind you that you do not use a personal name and you do not refer to anyone's presence or absence.

Mr. John O'Toole: A lack of experience, perhaps. It's perhaps my lack of experience here that I sort of slipped. But in fairness, the Liberals, with a couple of exceptions, the member from Vaughan and the member—what's her riding?

Mr. Todd Smith: Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. John O'Toole: Etobicoke Centre. They had the courage to stand by their convictions. On this side, it was absolutely clear, under the leadership of Tim Hudak, that we kept our word. Yes, there were people in the audience here who were clearly opposed to it. It was dealing with rights in a democratic process in a union that—we'll leave it at that; people can read Hansard.

But look, more importantly, at the vote. Remember, this was an agreement to clear the decks, as my friend from Prince Edward–Hastings says. We kept our word. What did they do? They broke their word. Who would have thought that a Liberal would ever break their word? That's what I think of when I think of them. I think if a Liberal promises something, don't believe it. You can't be trusted. You can't even have a decent argument with people who are always telling mistruths.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd direct the member to withdraw and to stick to the bill that we are debating.

Mr. John O'Toole: I withdraw. I've been scolded by the former high school teacher. Anyway, there you go. I'm used to that.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: She was a very good teacher, I'm sure. Nonetheless, I'm going to mention—I have to finish.

There's another very important bill. My colleague the member from Oxford has worked tirelessly. It's going to be five years, he's told me—tomorrow, is it?—when this thing is proclaimed, for this bill, the Hawkins-Gignac Act, which is mandating carbon monoxide detectors in homes. This happened, tragically, in his riding, where a family—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd remind the member once again to confine his remarks to the bill we are debating.

Mr. John O'Toole: I won't even get to the bill now, I've taken so much time just giving the background.

There's one other, with your indulgence. It's a program motion that Bill 60 is buried in. So much has been said about Bill 60 that people don't realize it was part of an agreement. This is like an accord, but they failed to keep their word. This is relevant to the discussion. We're keeping our word. The issue that should be left in the minds of the people of Ontario is, are they to be trusted? Are they the ones who keep their word?

I'm going back to Bill 60. I'm going to get to it now, because in the few minutes I have left, our main concern here is that most of this is covered by the federal regulations under the CRTC with respect to roaming charges and other charges and consistency in billing.

Remember, the genesis of Bill 60 really started with another, quite nice, young member, David Oraziotti, now the Minister of Natural Resources, who I think is doing a reasonably good job there. That was Bill 5. Mr. Oraziotti's bill was trashed. It ended up being—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member for Sault Ste. Marie as well. He's the Minister of Natural Resources now. I think it's appropriate to call them by their titles.

Here's the deal, though. When he brought that forward—Bill 5—we dealt with it in the House. It went to committee. What happened? Premier McGuinty prorogued the House. Another case—Madam Speaker, with all due respect, they can't be trusted. So I'm now going to relinquish the floor to my good partner.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour to rise this afternoon on behalf of the residents of Dufferin–Caledon to discuss Bill 60, the Wireless Services Agreements Act.

This is, of course, a government bill that was introduced by the Minister of Consumer Services six months ago, on April 29. Bill 60 basically sets out to address some of the more common issues people have with their mobile phones and mobile phone contracts.

These issues are, no doubt, worthy of consideration, as approximately 80% of Ontarians now own a mobile phone—and far too many of them are still using them in their vehicles. But, Speaker, I still can't help but feel that while this bill means well, it really is indicative of the Liberal government's total lack of a broader jobs plan for the province of Ontario. My reason for saying so is because here we see the Liberal government prioritizing an issue that, quite frankly, falls under the federal purview.

As I said earlier, the goals in Bill 60 may be worthy ones, but that doesn't change the fact that this bill really doesn't fall within provincial jurisdiction. This is puzzling to me, because at a time when over half a million people are looking for work in Ontario, you would think that this government would be more focused on the economy rather than laws and initiatives that don't fall under provincial jurisdiction.

I will admit that Premier Wynne and her Liberal government have had more on their minds lately, what with their seat-saver program of cancelling power plants blowing up in their faces and costing Ontario taxpayers \$1.1 billion. But that does not excuse the fact that we need a plan for Ontario's economy. We need bold action to facilitate job creation in our province.

Speaker, I haven't received a single complaint on this subject in my office, primarily because people know to call their federal counterparts. But what I have gotten complaints over is the skyrocketing price of hydro across Ontario. What I've gotten complaints about is the crippling new College of Trades tax being imposed on hundreds of hard-working Dufferin–Caledon tradespeople. What I have gotten many complaints on is Premier Wynne and the Liberals spending \$1.1 billion of taxpayers' money saving a couple of seats in a callous political scheme. Those are the issues I'm hearing about over and over again in Dufferin–Caledon, and I can tell you, people are not pleased.

That's why I can't help but feel like we're tinkering around the edges with this bill when we should be trying to implement bold new ideas to kick-start our economy.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, proposed passing a package of bills like this one so that we could, as was spoken of earlier, clear the decks and finally focus on the province's economy. Yet to date we still haven't seen anything that even remotely resembles a jobs plan from this Liberal government. Instead, we see bills like the one we are discussing here today, Bill 60.

I think it's important for viewers to understand that the opposition members have no input as to what bills get to be discussed. That is strictly under the control of the Liberal House leader. So when you tune in, and you say, "Why are they talking about this when they could be discussing the hydro plants?", it's because we have no choice. We must debate and discuss what the Liberal House leader and the Liberal government bring forward, which is why this is so frustrating.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm glad we are debating the wireless bill. I was actually listening very intently to the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton because when he talked about this wireless bill being on time allocation, and that the last deputants that they had were seniors expressing their concerns—I'm the seniors' critic, so I'm always looking to express concerns for seniors. It's a shame that when they presented their concerns, there wasn't really enough time allowed to make those amendments to this legislation so it could reflect the needs and barriers that seniors are seeing under Bill 60.

1730

As the member mentioned, there's the prepaid cellphone. Seniors often don't use their cellphone as a primary communication device—they generally like their land lines—but they do have a need for cellphones when they are travelling or if there is an emergency or they need to get hold of someone and they are not at home. Then they certainly can access the cellphone. They prepay that bill. Let's say they prepaid \$50 for that month. They have a certain amount of time to use that credit on their account on their cellphone, and the concern was that if they don't use it, it's lost. I don't think that's really fair. They've prepaid for a service; it should be kept there as a credit until they physically use all the money that they have prepaid on their cellphone.

The other concern that also was very interesting was—I'm going to use an example—is if they use \$35 of the \$50 credit they started with and the cellphone company says, "Oh, you've got a timeline. You've got to top that back up to \$50," it just seems really not meeting the needs of that consumer. We know that 20 years from now there's going to be a seniors boom, and a lot of these seniors are going to be on their cellphones, as they are today, and many of them may not find that daily use is what they need. They might be looking for just that pay-as-you-go and prepay-as-you-go.

So it's unfortunate that there was that time allocation and that these needs of a particular group weren't addressed through this bill. It could have been made better for seniors.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Thursday, October 3, 2013, I am now required to put the question.

Ms. MacCharles has moved third reading of Bill 60, An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I have received a request that the vote on third reading of Bill 60 be deferred until deferred votes on Wednesday, October 30, 2013.

Third reading vote deferred.

WASTE REDUCTION ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES DÉCHETS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 24, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to establish a new regime for the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 91, Loi créant un nouveau cadre pour la réduction, la réutilisation et le recyclage des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le réacheminement des déchets.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Applause.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues on all sides of the House.

It's shocking to Ontarians that the province has virtually stood still for the past 20 years on its waste reduction and recycling. Ontario actually, unfortunately, has the worst record in Canada. We are all sold on the significant economic opportunities and environmental benefits from waste reduction, reuse and recycling. We all chanted "Reduce, reuse, recycle" as our new mantra, and many people do make an effort to follow these guidelines to a better environment. They have reusable grocery bags, actively participate in composting kitchen waste and put product packaging out for recycling. But they also recognize that the packaging is excessive. I've heard many frustrations about the packaging of over-the-counter vitamins and other like products. The actual product often takes a quarter of the space of the bottle, and the rest is completely waste-producing.

I understand that this has put a damper on shoplifting, which is easier with smaller packaging, and I know that Ontarians will reuse that oversize packaging for many travel and household uses that maybe it wasn't meant for,

and let's hope that the chemical reactions on those uses don't have a negative impact on their health. But should we be forced to buy products that clearly are packaged beyond any reasonable expectation? That's not good.

Having said that, I believe that there is a strong support for producers paying the full cost of managing their products and packaging from day one to the final day of its use. To have effective waste reduction legislation, we need to include a plan with a goal of zero waste; the framework to recognize the hierarchy of reduce, reuse, recycle—the three Rs; clear targets and standards and regular, unrelenting enforcement by the government; a full-on education program targeting all sectors of our society; easy buy-in for the consumers; and that the producer companies, not governments and taxpayers, pay the full cost of environmentally dealing with their product waste.

Bill 91 is a beginning towards making producers responsible for the waste they produce. There are some benefits to Bill 91. It encourages greater producer cost by increasing to a 50% share of costs that producers pay for blue box programs. It's not quite clear on how much time until the producer's share will be ramped up to 100%. The timetable for producers to cover 100% of the costs of disposing municipal household hazardous waste is not clear; there's a little bit of a grey area there. The bill could increase diversion rates by establishing strong, clear, material-specific targets for recycling and diversion. Amendments will be needed to establish these targets and the timelines for their achievement. Including the ICI—industrial, commercial and institutional sector—is good, as is targeting its current 13% recycling rates.

The role of municipalities is important in the collection of solid waste. They have for some time set up the infrastructure and investments in waste collection and are experienced in providing curbside pickup and other convenient waste diversion options. However, producers could be concerned that municipalities are responsible for collection, yet the producers are responsible for the costs, which they can't control. Bill 91's determination of collection fees must be fair, transparent and identify principles on which reasonable costs are determined, and develop fair compensation formulas.

It is good that there is consideration of disposal bans in the bill. They are an effective tool for preventing recyclable material from going to landfills and for promoting innovation and investment in waste reduction. They are used in BC and Nova Scotia as we speak. Viable and easily accessible collection options must exist for banned materials as well. Landfill fees should reflect the full cost of landfilling. It should not be cheaper to send waste to a landfill than it is to recycle.

The bill places limitations on burning waste for energy. There are three main problems with incineration: (1) It is a very inefficient use of end products; (2) it has potentially negative health and environmental effects; (3) it locks municipalities into contracts that require them to secure a guaranteed waste stream for years to come,

which runs counter to the goal of moving towards a zero-waste province.

The bill includes a provision for all-in pricing. This will help reduce consumer confusion and ensure that the environmental costs of products are not passed on to the municipalities and the taxpayers.

Conversely, there are limitations to Bill 91. The vision of zero waste that the government has spoken about in the past appears to have been forgotten. The bill doesn't mention achieving zero waste or protecting the environment and human health. Also, the longer-term goal of the act should be that goods which are not safely recyclable are no longer sold, so we don't have that problem.

The bill doesn't recognize the importance of the hierarchy of the three Rs: reuse, reduce, and recycle. It doesn't give priority to waste reduction and does not encourage higher orders of recycling that promote the best use of a material. For example, recycling a glass bottle into a glass bottle should surely be given priority over a glass bottle being crushed to use as a roadbed. The bill also fails to encourage reuse, such as refillable/deposit return container systems, over recycling. A look across the country shows that provinces with deposit return systems have higher rates than those that don't. It does little to encourage the expansion of the LCBO/Beer Store deposit return systems, which are huge successes and big job creators in Ontario.

1740

Some other concerns with the bill include that it be strengthened by adding clear definitions of waste reduction, reuse, recycling and disposal. There's widespread concern about the lack of specifics in the bill about monitoring and enforcing a high standard of waste management and recycling services.

The bill seems to do little to directly promote reduced packaging, such as by working toward stronger regulations and working with other provinces and the federal government to set a timetable to reduce packaging.

There is concern about whether the bill does enough to ensure that producers are fully responsible for the end-management of their products.

The bill doesn't seem to address the challenge of the lack of uniformity of recycling services across Ontario and how it will encourage the expansion of materials that are collected.

There are concerns about the effectiveness and transparency of the new Waste Reduction Authority.

Is the framework created by this bill workable for producers and municipalities, or is it unduly complex? Is it burdensome and prone to conflict? We hope not.

Like many other pieces of Liberal government legislation, Bill 91 is enabling legislation. It provides a legal framework but leaves many of the details to regulation, and we know that regulations can be changed without the appropriate debate in the Legislature.

The complexity and massiveness of this bill are somewhat shocking. However, what we need to do is build a culture of reducing, reusing and recycling, and a vision of a zero-waste society. We need to make more progress in reducing waste from the industrial and commercial

sectors. We must ensure that recycling and re-processing takes place in a clean way and is not burned or shipped off to China.

We must make the system work for busy families. People shouldn't have to carry bottles home to recycle them because there aren't facilities conveniently placed in public places. Speaker, I live in downtown Toronto part of the time, and my building and many buildings in downtown Toronto don't have recycling. It all goes into one container. That's pretty scary. That's way behind the times.

We need to get back to the three Rs: reducing waste, reusing containers and materials where possible, and recycling the rest. There are real opportunities here to create jobs by moving towards refillable wine bottles and towards producing cars that can be dismantled and recycled here in Ontario. To do this, we must fund education and community-based programs that foster public understanding of the economic and environmental benefits of recycling and reducing waste.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments? I recognize the Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Speaker. You're doing an incredible job in the chair there, I might add.

Let me say to my good friend from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, I got a number of very pertinent comments on the record today about Bill 91. Given the fact that we've debated this for nine-plus hours, it's time to move this legislation forward, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Excellent. The member from Scarborough-Agincourt is doing a great job in the chair there.

I listened respectfully to the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, and I didn't quite hear his voice as loud. He's moved further away from where I sit.

I think he made some very good points. I do want to amend one of the things. He referred to the three Rs: reduce, reuse, recycle. I'd like to add one more R, and that's recover. It's very important, looking forward. There's no such thing, by any definition, as waste. It's material in another form. They are all resources of the province of Ontario that we share in the world. We turn things into garbage from very, very inert materials that are important to our economies.

Now, there are a couple of things. I want to first thank our critic, Michael Harris, and his staff: Shane and Rebecca have done a marvelous job researching and dissecting this bill. They have related to me a couple of very important things, because I have a very limited amount of time here.

One of them is that the ICI sector, the industrial, commercial and institutional sector, is the largest single sector. How is the Waste Diversion Ontario that we have today, and that they are trying to change, working? Well, the ICI sector itself has underperformed. In fact, recycling in the ICI sector has gone from 19% to 12%. That's a failing grade, actually.

As I said before, there are solutions out there. I would say that the overall response that I have had—I've had letters sent to me directly. One is by the head of Sony Canada. The Sony chief executive officer was quite critical of the bill. I hope the minister is here and I hope he takes a look at it because that's quite a damning approach.

Also, the Ontario Waste Management Association sent a letter to the minister—to all of us, actually—on September 20. Here's what they said: that the overall recycling rate of Ontario remains relatively stagnant. They haven't done anything. This bill here gives more power to Waste Diversion Ontario. It's unfortunate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm very pleased that I can stand here today and comment on the debate we had from the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek because he's a wonderful member and he spoke very well to this bill, so I applaud him for his comments on the debate. One of the things he talked about was reuse, recycle and reduce. Those are extremely important.

This bill certainly needs to be presented to the House because we are looking to the future. When we look to the future, when we look to the environment, we want to make sure that we have a plan for waste reduction. How this bill becomes effective is to make sure it actually works towards the goal it's meant to achieve. We need to have a real plan and targets and we need to make sure that we have a framework that gets us there.

Recognizing the hierarchy of the three Rs is extremely important. One of the things I really found—it's a very small step, but the grocery bags that you use now? You can actually buy them. They're \$1 at the grocery store, and you can continually reuse them. That's a small part in waste reduction.

There's a lot more to be done. I know that the member from Kenora-Rainy River is going to have some really good, insightful comments on this as well about how this bill can be improved, how much more we can do and how the record for this Liberal government—it hasn't really met its targets. Right now, Ontario has been failing in waste reduction. That's a sad commentary. I know that we did have goals at one time back in the 1990s to make sure that Ontario was one of the forefront provinces, leading the way to waste reduction. I hope we can do something with this bill and make sure we commit to waste reduction in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I thank the member for his comments. I thought they were constructive and very useful, and that he is hopeful, as all of us are, that this legislation will proceed to committee, where it will receive representations by those who have views on it; and that an opportunity for amendments to be proposed will be available at that time.

I really think that in this bill we've a bill which is a creature of all the members of the Legislature, because we have done some pretty extensive consultation on it. In

fact, I consulted with both the Conservative and NDP critics, as well as others out there.

There's one aspect of it I would like to explain that the member mentions, and that is the refillable. That's very popular; people like refillables. He will notice that when a Liberal, a Conservative and an NDP government all were in power, none of them moved to that. The reason is that many of the materials that would be taken back if they're refillables are very valuable in the blue box. If you take those out of the blue box, it becomes less valuable. The blue box is also very convenient to people. But I know that's something that is raised each time, and it's not inappropriate for the member to raise that issue.

I note that the Ontario Waste Management Association has been supportive of the principle of this bill, and many have. Listen, there's going to be some opposition. I understand that there are those who believe that the individual producers who produce the product that ultimately might be waste don't want to assume the cost. I understand that; it's very understandable. But either the consumer or the taxpayer is going to pay that cost, or the company itself that is producing it. One of the alternatives they talk about is, "Somebody else should pay the cost." It would ultimately be the municipal property taxpayer.

I commend the member on his contribution. I think it has been very helpful on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has two minutes to respond.

1750

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank all the members who spoke on my submission, especially the minister.

These types of bills are very difficult because you have so many different user groups and so many different companies that are involved in the financial perspective of the situation, and it becomes very difficult sometimes to please everybody. So what you do is, with some work with the opposition parties as well, you try to come to a reasonable conclusion that would be doable and also to kind of keep the masses from being very upset at you in different aspects of our society. So I commend the minister.

This is a very difficult bill to bring forward and to please. The NDP will be supporting him on his efforts because anything we can do to stop the waste in landfills and reduce pollution and recyclables that cause harm to our environment is a good thing. We try our best to minimize the cost to people that will be involved in it and do what's best for the people we represent.

I'd also like to thank the other speakers on their submissions and their kind words to me in support for what we're trying to get done here, which I think is a good thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank you for the opportunity to address Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act.

Bill 91 asserts that its purpose is to promote the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste derived from products, yet the minister has provided us with little or no reason to believe this claim.

In 2008, the Liberals confidently set the goal of achieving 60% waste diversion, yet here we are five years later and the number is still resting around 23%. The fact that the Liberals have not been able to increase waste reduction over the past decade holds true to their abysmal record on this issue within our province.

Instead of focusing on the environment, Bill 91 works towards establishing a new waste reduction regime, looking to harness excessive taxation powers in hopes of further developing this massive waste bureaucracy. The Liberals have already levied the Waste Diversion Act to create three tax schemes—Orange Drop, E-waste and the Used Tires Program—costing Ontario consumers an estimated \$200 million a year.

Now they look to institute the Waste Reduction Authority, which essentially remains the same agency as before with the same board and the same chair as Waste Diversion Ontario but allows for the setting and collection of fees. This authority would be given new taxation powers under section 22 of the act that would allow for the imposition of more taxes on businesses, the costs of which will certainly be passed on to consumers.

Under Bill 91, the authority would be given the power to collect fees or taxes in order to fund its own operations with optional accountability. This means that the authority collecting the taxes is not subject to the freedom-of-information act and would therefore have the right to determine whether or not to disclose how the taxes were calculated, reviewable only by the Auditor General if the minister deems it necessary.

I've taken the time to speak to several stakeholders and different industries that would be affected by the passage of Bill 91 and have found an enormous amount of backlash towards the bill. The beverage industry, for example, starkly opposes the new Waste Reduction Authority, as the estimated impact of Bill 91 would easily triple their costs and add an estimated \$300 million to \$500 million in cost to the Ontario industry overall.

This in turn would raise the cost of food packaging, which is a fee that will certainly be passed on to consumers—it's a tax on food, Madam Speaker—ultimately creating an unnecessary obstacle for middle-class and lower-income individuals in Ontario. These taxes will affect the quality of the day-to-day lives of numerous Ontarians, from single parents living paycheque to paycheque to recent graduates working towards paying off their student loans. These new taxes will surely have severe ramifications for all of us.

With the costs of packaging potentially tripling in Ontario, consumers may be forced to look elsewhere for more reasonably priced goods, such as online or in the United States of America, creating further losses for our once productive businesses.

These new taxes and red tape brought on by this bill will hamper job creation. In many cases, it will actually

increase unemployment. It will certainly increase the cost of food.

In addition to excessive taxation, Bill 91, the so-called Waste Reduction Act, is full of misleading discourse. The use of the term "individual producer responsibility," or IPR, as used by the minister, creates a convoluted process for businesses to join collectives called intermediaries. After having joined an intermediary, the individual business, or producer, is no longer held responsible for the waste reduction; the intermediary is.

This contradicts the very meaning of individual producer responsibility, or IPR, as outlined in the act, by not permitting businesses to manage their own recycling and instead allowing for the nurturing of a massive bureaucracy to manage the entire system. This will simply tie up municipalities and producers in a constant battle over money, detracting from what the real goal should be: preserving our environment by limiting the waste reaching our landfills in the first place.

This is a bill that is designed to create more public sector, unionized garbage/waste collector jobs at the expense of good-paying private sector industry jobs. What we do know is that this is going to cost industry in the hundreds of millions of dollars to create these public sector jobs for the government.

It's the belief of those actually working in the industry—you know, the ones who will be affected by the legislation—that producers should have autonomy to choose the right service providers that support them in meeting their recycling targets. This is simply the free market system.

Why we are deviating to "Big Brother knows all" with respect to waste management in this province is beyond me, other than it's a Liberal culture. It's ingrained in their thinking, and it's the way they like to do business. But it doesn't make sense, and it doesn't make sense for waste diversion in the province of Ontario when there are hundreds, if not thousands, of private companies that would like to compete for your waste and like to compete to find ways to divert it from our landfills.

A producer must be allowed to base its business relationships on commercial agreements negotiated in a free market manner, and any individual producer responsibility, IPR, framework must provide the flexibility and the levers to drive competition and efficiency. Bill 91 is effectively removing these levers and constraining the market mechanisms that would otherwise drive cost controls, efficiency and fund innovation.

Municipalities should not be mandated by legislation to collect or process subject materials, as I said, Madam Speaker, nor should producers be required to pay municipalities for their services. This relationship should be negotiated in a fair and competitive manner, guided by targets, accessibility requirements and strict operational standards set by the province.

Instead of dictating recycling fees to the private sector, why doesn't the government set standards and targets for recycling and then allow the private sector to meet those standards?

Industry control of the waste stream would allow for consistent collection standards across all municipalities, efficient waste sorting and processing, improved revenue by leveraging economies of scale of the resale of material, and reduced collection costs through enhanced competition for services.

The Liberals have been blinded by their taxation theme, too busy reaching into the pockets of the average Ontarian to affect real change in waste reduction. Since the Liberals took office, they have managed to collect nearly a quarter of a billion dollars a year in eco taxes, while simultaneously allowing recycling in the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors to experience an overall decline, as my colleague from Durham just said, from 19% to 12%.

The entirety of their eco tax program manages to cover only 3% of the waste stream, I think people at home would be quite interested in knowing, having used billions of taxpayers' dollars to accomplish an embarrassing little over the last 10 years.

The authority, as laid out in this bill, is purposely disconnected from Parliament, and, as such, it's not subject, as I said earlier, to the freedom-of-information act, allowing it to evade the accountability that is demanded and expected by the people of Ontario.

The Canadian Environmental Law Association is one of the many who agree with this position, stating, "It is critical that the enforcement and compliance of the industry remain in the ministry's hands because the enforcement of environmental standards is a core government function."

1800

It's time for a bold reform of our waste reduction policies, Madam Speaker, and time for Ontario to return as a leader in the environmental field yet again. In order for this to happen, we must stop listening to the excuses and disorganized policies that have been perpetrating the Liberal record of failure. Instead, we must introduce reforms to protect consumers, improve the environment, and provide greater accountability and oversight, allowing for competition to percolate the recycling marketplace. Achieving these goals would create well-paying jobs and ultimately lead to higher rates of waste diversion in the province.

Madam Speaker, I see that I've run out of time. I thank you for your indulgence.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Simcoe North has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to

his question given by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities concerning the College of Trades Amendment Act. The member has up to five minutes to make his remarks, and the parliamentary assistant has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to be here and I thank you for the opportunity to do this, this evening.

My question to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities—I was really disappointed in his answers and I want to mention a couple of reasons why. My Bill 118, which I introduced in this Legislature, dealt with removing section 7 out of the Ontario College of Trades Act. The reason I wanted it removed is the fact that, first of all, if you look at the reasons the government of Ontario—one of the things they brag about, next to consumer protection, is the fact that the College of Trades is self-regulating. Any of the other self-regulating colleges that we have in this province do not have any kind of a phrase or any kind of a regulation that would apply to the employer.

For example, all of the school boards that represent all of the children in the province of Ontario, that administer, do not pay any money to the College of Teachers. There's no fee there, there's no clause—no anything. Then take, for example, all of the hospitals we have in the province of Ontario. None of the hospitals pay any of the fees that go towards the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the College of Nurses, the dental organizations. We simply do not have those fees applied to any of those self-regulating colleges, but here in section 7—although the minister says, “Don't worry about it. It's never, ever going to be proclaimed,” the fact of the matter is that it's still in the act. On the spur of the moment, it could actually be imposed on businesses.

When they were setting up the membership fees in the Ontario College of Trades, they went to the trouble of actually putting on their website the fees that would apply to businesses that employed any of the people who were tradespeople in Ontario. That included all the people who were in the voluntary trades as well as the non-compulsory trades, which represents 157 trades in Ontario. They campaigned on that. Their website advocated feedback on that.

Of course, you know what happened? Literally thousands of companies said, “No. You have no right to try and charge us a fee as well. It's bad enough that you charge a 600% increase in the fees to a member, a tradesperson, who wants to join the College of Trades, but now you actually want to charge the businesses as well.” There was so much pressure on it that they did not proclaim that part of the bill. I simply want that section of the bill removed once and for all. That's what Bill 118 says, and that's what I expected to hear from my minister.

The reality is that he didn't listen to that. If we look at this overall bill, I think it's good for the people, I think it's good for the stakeholders that I represent and, overall,

I think it's good for the tradespeople in the province of Ontario as well.

I was disappointed in his answer. He tried to say that later on—we don't want to ignore them because they might want to join the College of Trades or they might want to be active in it. If you remove section 7 out of the College of Trades act, there's nothing stopping any business person from ever being actively involved with the College of Trades or giving them ideas or submissions, whatever it may be. But to leave this tax looming over their heads I think is a real problem.

I heard it as early as this morning from a group of people probably representing about 100,000 employees in the province of Ontario. They're still saying, “You're on the right track. Section 7 should be removed once and for all.”

I want to put that on the record because we certainly don't get enough time in question period to ask.

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: We don't get an answer, either. But the reality is that I think it's a good move, I think it's a positive move, and I'm happy that I brought that bill forward. At some point I will be debating it, and I hope that the minister at that point will actually remove section 7 out of the bill once and for all and not have this tax looming over the heads of the businesses in the province of Ontario, especially in this business month in Ontario and Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The parliamentary assistant has five minutes in which to respond.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise, to be given this opportunity to respond to the member from Simcoe North in terms of the proposed legislation.

Madam Speaker, all skilled workers should hear the lack of respect that the opposition party is saying about the College of Trades. The point of this bill is to frighten business people into thinking that they're being taxed, when no tax exists, or that the opposition is protecting them from danger, when no threat exists.

What the opposition is saying today, and has consistently said, is that skilled workers, apprentices and employees shouldn't be trusted. That's not true. We know they are trustworthy. And the opposition, again, this evening, have not shown leadership on this whole piece. They can't be trusted with regard to the changes that we're trying to do.

This bill is not about protecting the employers; it's about protecting the opposition's sense of entitlement. It's about protecting their beliefs that decisions about skilled trades should be in the hands of politicians instead of employers, skilled workers and apprentices, the people most qualified to provide that leadership.

Madam Speaker, as a member of a professional college—before I became a member of this chamber, I belonged to the College of Nurses, and there are other members here in the opposition parties from the College of Nurses, the College of Pharmacists, the College of Teachers, the Law Society of Upper Canada. These are all professional bodies. To say the trades members cannot

be a member of a professional body is absolutely insulting and disrespectful.

I wanted to share a quote from a member of a trade who wrote to the Orangeville Banner recently. He said, "As a local consumer, tradesperson, and recently appointed member of the Ontario College of Trades ... hoisting engineer trade board....

"I believe the general public will realize the benefits"—benefits—"of this model as the OCOT approaches"—in terms of supporting the public.

So, Madam Speaker, our government is the first in Ontario to make apprenticeships a priority. Over the past 10 years, our government has significantly expanded the apprenticeship program. There are approximately 120,000 apprentices learning a trade today, which is about 60,000 more than in 2002-03. The new annual apprenticeship registrations have grown from 17,000 in 2002-03 to more than 30,000 right now, in 2012-13.

The College of Trades plays a significant role in our strategy in terms of getting the work out there being done. The college marks tremendous steps in terms of moving the trades forward. For the first time, people who work in the skilled trades have the ability to make decisions autonomous of the government or the politicians. When employers hire members of the college, they know those tradespersons are trained and qualified. Thanks to the registry of the membership of the College of Trades and the website, consumers and employers can verify the qualifications of an individual skilled tradesperson.

In a recent article in the *Toronto Star*, Ellen Roseman wrote, "Thanks to the Ontario College of Trades, you can check on the contractors you plan to hire. The college has a public registry, which says whether or not a tradesperson is certified."

Furthermore, the Ontario College of Trades has created an easy way, according to the article, in terms of going to the registry—you can find out the qualifications, the record of the individual. This is what accountability is about.

1810

We have always heard over the last few years of the nightmares and the tragedies of seniors being taken to the cleaners by these so-called tradespersons. I don't know if the member opposite—he's not here right now to listen to the story. There was an article from as recently as June of this year. A contractor was convicted of multiple frauds to seniors. Jack Singer destroyed the home of Mrs. Kennis Heath, costing her more than \$300,000. How many constituents hear of these tragedies every day?

Thanks to the College of Trades, we can now have an opportunity to see who has been registered, who is not registered. Since the college has been proclaimed, we know that it has an opportunity to protect the public. That's the essence of this college, no different than any other existing college of trades today.

Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to be provided with the opportunity to address this issue of the opposition member.

JOB CREATION

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The second question, then: Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Kitchener-Conestoga has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of the Environment on Bill 91. The parliamentary assistant will have up to five minutes to respond.

The member for Kitchener-Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Last week, in fact, I did have a question to the environment minister. Although I only had the first of two questions sent out, I know that with a non-answer in the first half, I'm likely to get a non-answer in the second.

The question was with regard to a very specific reference to Bill 91. All I got was obfuscation and Liberal spin.

As a member of this House and a relatively new one, I have to say I was quite disappointed, in fact, with my honourable colleague. We are elected here to represent our constituents and debate serious government business in this fine chamber. Yet the minister continually refuses to provide answers to the most basic questions about the bill he tabled. Last week was just another stunning example of this.

For the record, my question was: How is taking a half a billion dollars out of Ontario's manufacturing sector a serious jobs plan? That was the question. The minister, as Ontarians expect, should have defended his policy. But what did he say? He avoided the question altogether and engaged in childish ad hominem attacks.

Because the environment minister wouldn't answer my question, I think it's fair to assume that my premise was correct. Last week, I stated that Bill 91 is based on the same risky economic theories as the Green Energy Act. It's a simple scheme with disastrous consequences. Essentially, the Liberals think that Ontario's job creators should be burdened with massive new regulatory costs and taxes, which are then passed on to consumers. Even if this initial stage kills thousands of jobs, the Liberals view it as just a necessary cost of implementing their overall scheme. The money the Liberals take from Ontario's job creators is then passed on to a select group of companies in the industry that they want to subsidize.

The Liberals try to make these schemes sound good, but we all know they don't work. Just look at the Green Energy Act. The Liberals rushed this piece of legislation through the House, ignoring all concerns raised along the way. What was the result? Thousands of job losses in Ontario's manufacturing sector and some of the highest industrial energy rates in North America. In the end, it was ordinary Ontarians who paid the price for this green energy social experiment, through their hydro bills. I just heard on the news of the devastation, the potential job losses to come at US Steel in Hamilton. A lot would likely have to do with some of those high energy rates.

Of course, the same is true of the Liberals' eco tax schemes. The Liberals like to say that eco taxes are the

responsibility of producers. Then they claim that having producers pick up the tab saves taxpayers money. But notice how they always say “the taxpayer.” The Liberals would never make this claim about consumers or Ontarians in general. That’s because they know eco taxes are just passed on to consumers when they make a purchase. But what the Liberals are forgetting to mention is that the taxpayer and the consumer are in fact the same person—yes, it’s true. In the end, ordinary Ontarians are again left to foot the bill for the Liberals’ dangerous economic experiments.

The spin used to hide the details of Liberal schemes is just another silly game the minister plays to confuse people. The trouble is, Bill 91 isn’t a game. It’s a massive piece of legislation with the potential to kill jobs and create half a billion dollars in new costs for consumers. It’s time for the Liberal government to start providing some information to the public.

We have seen the Premier at press conferences touting the government’s so-called plan to open up government. Let’s put those claims here to the test. The minister should table whatever economic analysis the government has in fact conducted on Bill 91. But if the minister is really brave and really wants to do the right thing for his party, his constituents and our province, he will drop Bill 91 and begin working with us to actually implement the Ontario PC caucus waste diversion plan. Government shouldn’t take money from consumers’ pockets to create jobs in one sector. It should create the right conditions for economic growth, regulate the marketplace and let the private sector take care of job creation.

That’s why we put forward a bold plan last November to create jobs in the recycling industry without sacrificing Ontario’s manufacturing sector. We would start that by scrapping Liberal eco tax programs and eliminating the government’s useless recycling bureaucracy. We believe businesses should do their part to recover and recycle materials into new products, but rather than creating complicated bureaucracy and massive new costs for consumers, we would simply create the right conditions for economic growth. We would do this by having the environment ministry set measurable and achievable recycling targets for certain materials, establish environmental standards, measure those outcomes, and enforce the rules.

That’s it, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The parliamentary assistant has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I’m pleased to see the concern that the member from Kitchener–Conestoga has for Ontario jobs. The market value of materials that are currently landfilled in Canada is estimated at over \$1 billion annually—Environment Canada 2010 report.

Imagine the economic opportunities that could be harnessed if only these valuable resources were diverted from landfills, especially when we consider that at the moment in Ontario, based on the legislation that we took over 10 years ago, we are only recycling 25% of our

waste. We all know that’s bad for the environment. It’s also bad for our economy, because we’re not only disposing of waste; we’re throwing away economic opportunities along with it.

We appreciate the great economic opportunity that recycling offers and that the economic benefits of diversion are four times greater than the net cost to recycle. We also know that if we dispose of 1,000 tonnes of waste in landfill, one person is employed, but if we recycle 1,000 tonnes of waste, seven people are employed. That’s right: Seven jobs are created in recycling for every one job in disposal.

I know my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga understands these opportunities as well. In an April 24, 2013, press release, the member clearly articulates the connection between recycling and increased job activity and potential for job growth:

“We understand that recycling valuable materials, like plastics, glass and metals, means less pollution and more economic activity in Ontario’s recycling marketplace.

“Just think that for every job created to landfill waste, seven more jobs could have been created in the recycling sector to divert that waste into more productive uses.”

The member acknowledges that more diversion equals more jobs.

He has also expressed concern over the low diversion rate of the ICI sectors, which generate the majority of the waste in the province but recycle only a small portion of it, a mere 11%. The proposed act would allow us to kick-start recycling in the ICI sector by designating waste for diversion, starting with paper and packaging. It is estimated that diverting 50% of ICI paper and packaging and transitioning the existing waste programs to the new framework could generate approximately \$995 million in gross domestic product and 10,000 jobs.

Unless we move forward with the proposed act, we will be stuck with our laggardly diversion rates and continue to forgo the opportunity to create more jobs through recycling.

I believe that the individual producer responsibility approach embodied in the proposed act is the best way to achieve our goals of boosting recycling rates, diverting end-of-life resources back into the economy and creating more jobs. The member from Kitchener–Conestoga has suggested that he doesn’t want the producers to have financial and environmental responsibility over the materials they produce.

1820

Mr. Speaker, producers have an important role to play in the success of the proposed act. If passed, the proposed Waste Reduction Act would enable additional blue box costs to be shifted from the municipal taxpayers to individual producers, by removing the 50% cap on industry funding to municipalities under the blue box program. I understand producers feel that if they pay more, they should be more involved in how their money is spent and managed. I recognize those concerns. No one wants to write a blank cheque. I do not believe that municipalities

are asking for a blank cheque, and it's certainly not the intention of the proposed legislation to provide one.

I recognize, as do the municipalities, that as we look to increase producer funding of the blue box program, we need to consider how to mitigate the cost impacts on producers. Whether that is through harmonizing the type of material being collected or giving producers greater responsibility for the post-collection management of blue box waste, it wouldn't happen overnight. Transition would be a multi-year process and would require extensive stakeholder consultations to seek input and advice, including on when and how to move to greater than 50% producer funding and how this may impact roles and responsibilities.

We will continue with this collaborative and balanced approach in a way that engages all stakeholders every step of the way. There has been some constructive and thoughtful conversation in the House thus far to support that we build on our collective commitment to the environment and harness economic opportunities that come out of this collective commitment. We need to build on our efforts to increase diversion in the province, get this bill to committee and not allow our common efforts to be mired in partisan rhetoric.

INVASIVE SPECIES

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Our third question this evening comes from the member for Haldimand-Norfolk. He has given his notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of the Environment on Asian carp in the Great Lakes. You have up to five minutes to make your comments.

Mr. Toby Barrett: My late show question is to the Minister of Natural Resources, because the threat of an Asian carp invasion—the question I asked yesterday—is an MNR issue; it's not environment.

Yesterday, the United States Geological Survey issued a statement that four Asian grass carp caught by a commercial fisherman in October 2012 had lived in the Sandusky watershed their entire lives. If true, that means that there are Asian grass carp reproducing in Great Lakes tributaries.

Asian carp—the black, the bighead, the silver and the grass carp—are, in my view, the largest threat that the Great Lakes has ever known. These fish reproduce explosively. They consume so much food that the Great Lakes ecosystem could be devastated.

The Ohio Sandusky River is a tributary flowing into western Lake Erie. Western Lake Erie is the nursery, the spawning bed, for many species that inhabit the entire lake. If the grass carp population explodes, it can devastate the marshes and the vegetation of shallow Lake Erie when it spreads. It will favour the warm, vegetation-filled waters of Lake St. Clair, Rondeau Bay and Long Point Bay.

That same vegetation makes those areas an important stopover for migrating waterfowl. Long Point Bay is

considered one of the top staging areas for migratory waterfowl in eastern North America. My father was employed by the Long Point Co. Dedicated duck hunters come from across Canada, the United States and England because it's such good hunting. The impact of grass carp could be huge and far-reaching. It could impact waterfowl on a continental scale.

I understand that the lab at the University of Windsor was crucial in reaching the conclusion that the grass carp involved in yesterday's announcement were born and bred in the Sandusky River. That's money well spent, investing to make the University of Windsor a research leader, but why, when the fish were caught last year, has it taken a year to get results? I imagine some of these processes take time, but we should be on top of this. It has to be a priority.

Again, I ask the MNR, what are you doing to make this a cross-border, cross-lake priority? It's on American soil, but our Great Lakes are a shared resource. Again, I ask MNR, what is your plan to prevent the further spread of Asian carp? Billions and billions in tourism and fishery dollars are at stake. We need action, not more environmental laws or strategies or panels or dithering. We need an MNR bill to put invasive species on the front burner and make it a top priority. It's an MNR issue, not environment.

Ministry staff need the reallocated financial resources to deal with it. It needs to be a government priority. Put the focus on Great Lakes protection. The wolf is truly at the door. This will cripple the Great Lakes. There's a \$7-billion sports fishery, a \$234-million commercial fishery, and this is above the \$7 billion, year after year, that potentially could be lost through tourism and economic activity.

We know that in the coming months scientists will look at how grass carp became established in the Sandusky. No one knows the outcome. It's likely a human-assisted introduction, perhaps through Eagle Marsh, which is connecting the Mississippi watershed with the Great Lakes. I learned of that potential invasion route from Professor David Frew of Mercyhurst college in Erie, Pennsylvania.

Of course, the concern as well is the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. Electronic barriers are being employed there.

A fence was built across Eagle Marsh. I think that marsh should be drained. There's talk of building a berm. There is a problem, and I acknowledge that a lot of it is due to American politics not dealing with separating these two watersheds.

Two grass carp were discovered in my riding. These ones were sterile, but they were at Lake Erie, at the mouth of the Grand River. I know the Ministry of Natural Resources has accomplished a number of other measures—to gut these fish, for example, to make sure that they are dead when they come in—but things are being circumvented.

I'll just very quickly quote the Toledo Blade with respect to Asian carp becoming established. As they say, this could be a "disaster of biblical proportions."

Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The parliamentary assistant.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I want to thank the member for Haldimand–Norfolk for the question, and I appreciate the chance to reaffirm our government's commitment to this important issue.

Asian carp are a serious economic, social and environmental threat to Ontario and to all jurisdictions in the Great Lakes watershed. Preventing the spread of Asian carp and other invasive species throughout the Great Lakes system continues to be a priority for this government. To date, our government has demonstrated a commitment to fighting the spread of invasive species and has taken strong action.

We have worked and continue to work closely with our federal partners at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, as well as with other Great Lake states. Together in 2011, we developed an Asian carp response plan to create a framework should Asian carp ever spread to Ontario's waters. We worked with our federal partners to conduct a simulated emergency exercise to ensure our readiness to respond if Asian carp are found in Ontario waters, and I guess when you look at the news yesterday, it's very disturbing about the carp in the Sandusky watershed.

Back in 2005, our government took the important step of banning the possession of live Asian carp. Since then, Ontario's conservation officers have worked with the Canada Border Services Agency and intercepted almost 39,000 pounds of Asian carp at the border—that figure is frightening—Asian carp which was destined for Ontario markets.

Our government also worked to establish the Invasive Species Centre in Sault Ste. Marie. This facility creates an opportunity to coordinate and to work with the federal government and international partners to address the threat posed to our forests and waterways from these plants and animals. Our government has provided \$7.7 million toward the establishment and operation of the centre, and MNR has recently announced funding of an additional \$1.16 million for the important work done at this facility.

We remain vigilant to the threat of Asian carp and have continued to expand our surveillance programs using both DNA monitoring and traditional methods. To date, no bighead or silver Asian carp specimens or DNA have been detected in Ontario waters.

However, Asian carp is just one of the invasive species that our government is taking action against. We recognize that these species not only pose a real threat to Ontario's biodiversity and ecology, but can also have real economic impacts. That's why our government has taken action.

In July 2012, the Ministry of Natural Resources released the Ontario Invasive Species Strategic Plan. Our plan will improve Ontario's ability to prevent, detect and respond to the threat of invasive species like Asian carp or the emerald ash borer. The plan calls for better communication and coordination among federal and municipal governments and will also help build strong networks with conservation groups, our First Nations partners and neighbouring US states to help fight invasive species.

Even more recently, we prepared an invasive species discussion paper that outlines a new prevention and management framework which better addresses Ontario's invasive species problems. This paper has recently come down off the Environmental Registry, and the ministry is reviewing comments while embarking on even more direct stakeholder consultation concerning our new approach.

We also work closely with our partners in the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters to educate Ontarians about where invasive species live, and their impact on the surrounding environment. Through this partnership, we help fund the invading species hotline for the public to report invasive species and obtain information on how to control them. MNR encourages citizens to report possible sightings of Asian carp to the provincial invading species hotline at 1-800-563-7711.

Let me assure the member opposite that our government has a strong record when it comes to fighting invasive species. However, the problem is complex and requires partnerships across jurisdictional boundaries. Because of this, we also require the help of the federal government, especially the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. I would encourage the members opposite—all the members in the House—to lobby their federal counterparts to come to the table to work with us to help prevent the spread of these disruptive species.

Our government and the Ministry of Natural Resources will continue to work with neighbouring jurisdictions to ensure effective leadership and coordination in dealing with this dangerous cross-border issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): There being no further matter to debate, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1831.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
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Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

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Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
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Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
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Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
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MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
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Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
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McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
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Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
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Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Continued from back cover

Hospital funding

Mr. Tim Hudak	3994
Hon. John Milloy	3994

Workplace safety

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	3995
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	3995

Access to information

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	3995
Hon. John Milloy	3995

Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Mr. Steve Clark	3996
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	3996

Accessibility for the disabled

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	3996
Hon. Eric Hoskins	3997

Correction of record

Hon. Jeff Leal.....	3997
---------------------	------

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Fairness and Competitiveness in Ontario's

Construction Industry Act, 2013, Bill 74,

Mr. McNaughton / Loi de 2013 sur l'équité et la compétitivité dans l'industrie ontarienne de la construction, projet de loi 74, M. McNaughton

Third reading negative	3997
------------------------------	------

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	3997
------------------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. Linda Jeffrey	3998
Miss Monique Taylor.....	3998
Mr. John Fraser	3998
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	3998
Hon. Reza Moridi.....	3998

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Communities in Bloom awards

Mr. Randy Pettapiece.....	3998
---------------------------	------

Education funding

Mr. Paul Miller.....	3998
----------------------	------

Anniversary of founding of Turkey

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield	3998
-------------------------------	------

Communities in Bloom awards

Mr. Monte McNaughton	3999
----------------------------	------

Economic inequality

Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	3999
---------------------------	------

Big Brothers Big Sisters

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	3999
------------------------------	------

Infrastructure program funding

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	3999
------------------------	------

Roderick McDonald

Mr. John Fraser	4000
-----------------------	------

Georgetown Hospital

Mr. Ted Arnott	4000
----------------------	------

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Government Agencies

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	4000
Report deemed adopted.....	4000

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Members' Accommodation Allowances Act, 2013,

Bill 123, Mr. Milloy / Loi de 2013 sur les allocations de logement des députés, projet de loi 123, M. Milloy

First reading agreed to.....	4001
Hon. John Milloy	4001

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Employment supports

Hon. Brad Duguid	4001
Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	4002
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	4003

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Wind turbines

Mr. Jim Wilson.....	4003
---------------------	------

Office of the Ombudsman

Miss Monique Taylor	4004
---------------------------	------

Cellular transmission equipment

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	4004
------------------------------	------

Darlington nuclear generating station

Mr. John O'Toole.....	4004
-----------------------	------

Bear hunting

Mr. Bill Mauro	4004
----------------------	------

Accessibility for the disabled	
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	4005
Physiotherapy services	
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	4005
Taxation	
Ms. Sarah Campbell.....	4005
Small business	
Ms. Soo Wong.....	4005
Diabetes	
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	4006
Accessibility for the disabled	
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	4006
Small business	
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn.....	4006
Air quality	
Ms. Sylvia Jones.....	4006
Bear hunting	
Mr. Bill Mauro.....	4007

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2013, Bill 60, Ms. MacCharles / Loi de 2013 sur les conventions de services sans fil, projet de loi 60, Mme MacCharles	
Hon. Tracy MacCharles.....	4007
Mr. Toby Barrett.....	4010
Mr. Jagmeet Singh.....	4011
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	4017

Mr. Todd Smith.....	4019
Mr. John O'Toole.....	4020
Ms. Sylvia Jones.....	4021
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	4022
Third reading vote deferred.....	4022
Waste Reduction Act, 2013, Bill 91, Mr. Bradley / Loi de 2013 sur la réduction des déchets, projet de loi 91, M. Bradley	
Mr. Paul Miller.....	4022
Hon. Jeff Leal.....	4024
Mr. John O'Toole.....	4024
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	4024
Hon. James J. Bradley.....	4024
Mr. Paul Miller.....	4025
Mr. Jim Wilson.....	4025
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	4026

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE / DÉBAT SUR LA MOTION D'AJOURNEMENT

Ontario College of Trades	
Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	4027
Ms. Soo Wong.....	4027
Job creation	
Mr. Michael Harris.....	4028
Mr. Phil McNeely.....	4029
Invasive species	
Mr. Toby Barrett.....	4030
Mr. Phil McNeely.....	4031

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 29 October 2013 / Mardi 29 octobre 2013

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013, Bill 105, Mr. Sousa / Loi de 2013 visant à soutenir les petites entreprises, projet de loi 105, M. Sousa

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	3975
Hon. John Milloy	3975
Mr. John O'Toole	3976
Ms. Catherine Fife	3976
Mr. Jim McDonell	3976
Ms. Cindy Forster	3977
Mr. Steven Del Duca	3978
Mr. John O'Toole	3978
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	3978
Hon. Ted McMeekin	3979
Ms. Cindy Forster	3979
Mr. Rick Nicholls	3979
Ms. Cindy Forster	3981
Hon. Ted McMeekin	3981
Mr. Victor Fedeli	3981
Ms. Catherine Fife	3981
Mr. Rick Nicholls	3982
Ms. Laurie Scott	3982
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	3984
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	3984
Mr. Rick Nicholls	3984
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	3984
Ms. Laurie Scott	3985
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	3985

Wearing of pins

Hon. Tracy MacCharles	3985
-----------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mrs. Jane McKenna	3985
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	3985
Mr. Monte McNaughton	3985
Mr. Rick Bartolucci	3985
Mr. Monte McNaughton	3985
Hon. John Milloy	3986
Mme France Gélinas	3986
L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur	3986
Ms. Andrea Horwath	3986
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	3986
Mr. Todd Smith	3986

Hon. Liz Sandals	3986
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	3986
Hon. Reza Moridi	3986
Mr. Bill Mauro	3986
Hon. Glen R. Murray	3986
Mr. Bas Balkissoon	3986
Hon. Michael Gravelle	3986
Mr. Steven Del Duca	3986

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Job creation

Mr. Tim Hudak	3986
Hon. John Milloy	3987
Hon. Eric Hoskins	3987

Ontario economy

Mr. Tim Hudak	3987
Hon. John Milloy	3988

Energy policies

Ms. Andrea Horwath	3989
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	3989

Air quality

Ms. Andrea Horwath	3989
Hon. John Milloy	3989
Hon. James J. Bradley	3990

Pan Am Games

Mr. Rod Jackson	3990
Hon. Michael Chan	3990

Horse racing industry

Mr. Taras Natyshak	3991
Hon. Jeff Leal	3991

Rural economic development

Ms. Helena Jaczek	3991
Hon. Jeff Leal	3991

Air quality

Mr. Michael Harris	3992
Hon. James J. Bradley	3992

Mining industry

Mr. Michael Mantha	3993
Hon. Michael Gravelle	3993

Public transit

Mrs. Amrit Mangat	3993
Hon. Glen R. Murray	3993

Continued on inside back cover

2A20N
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D 23



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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 30 October 2013

Mercredi 30 octobre 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 30 October 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 30 octobre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Mrs. Sandals moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario's school system / Projet de loi 122, Loi concernant la négociation collective dans le système scolaire de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mrs. Sandals.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Speaker, I stand in the House today to speak in support of the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, and I will be sharing the time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Scarborough–Rouge River.

We are rising in support of this bill that will, if passed, provide an improved legal framework for collective bargaining in the education sector. It would ensure that the roles and responsibilities of all parties are clear at the outset of the new collective bargaining process, and it would continue our efforts to repair relationships with our education partners, to put previous challenges behind us and, most importantly, to move forward.

Since I was first appointed Minister of Education, rebuilding relationships with our education partners has been my number one priority. We made great progress in the spring, as our partners in public, elementary and secondary schools returned to providing extracurricular activities. We made further progress by reaching memoranda of understanding with all of our education partners that helped build a positive start to the current school year and keep our collective focus on improving student achievement in our schools from now until the expiry of the current contracts in August 2014.

This bill is a critical next step in the progress we have already made. We need to ensure a clear and consistent labour framework that works for all parties involved, and I'm confident that the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act would put that clear framework in place. For too

long, we have worked with a bargaining process that was outdated and did not reflect the current realities of the education system.

Legally, local school boards bargain with local unions. But back in 1998, under the previous government, local school boards were stripped of their taxation powers while maintaining their status as the employer in collective bargaining. Meanwhile, the province became the sole funder for the education system, yet did not have a formal legal role in collective bargaining. In other words, local boards recruit, employ and supervise teachers but rely on provincial funding to run their schools, yet the government has no statutory role to bargain over issues that are inextricably linked to funding. This was obviously unsustainable and needed to be addressed. As a result, our government then created the provincial discussion tables and, through these voluntary forums, made significant investments and improvements in the education sector.

In 2004 and 2008, working together with federations, unions and school boards, our government facilitated agreements that benefited employees and boards, while ensuring peace and stability for students and families. The PDTs, or provincial discussion tables, helped bring the unions and school boards together, with the government acting as a facilitator to reach province-wide framework agreements on major issues of province-wide significance, such as compensation and benefits.

As a result of the PDTs, and our commitment to invest in publicly funded education in Ontario, things changed. For example, the 2004-08 PDT agreement resulted in: funding for 2,630 elementary specialist teachers; funding for 1,900 secondary student success teachers; and zero learning days were lost due to full-time teacher strikes.

Building on that, the 2008-12 PDT resulted in: funding for 2,300 elementary specialist teachers; funding for 220 grades 7-8 teachers to support literacy and numeracy initiatives; and funding for 650 grades 4-8 class-size reduction teachers; funding for 890 secondary teachers; 400 additional professional and paraprofessional staff; 215 additional office support workers; approximately 500 additional custodians; and eight school years without a full-time teacher strike.

These were solid investments to ensure our schools had the resources they needed to help students succeed. However, this forum for negotiating, the voluntary provincial discussion tables, were just that: voluntary. The province supplemented the local process with a central process, and that helped. But it was still an ad hoc process, one that worked better when investments in education were increasing.

Now we are in a time of fiscal restraint and facing a challenging mandate. In order to produce an improved process more ready to deal with the coming challenges, we want to move to greater consistency. The process should be made into a legal framework that more clearly recognizes boards as employers and provides a clearer role in bargaining for the government as the funder. And in our 2012 budget, we pledged to establish a new legislative framework for provincial bargaining in the education sector.

That is why we have proposed this groundbreaking legislation. If passed, it will move beyond the voluntary discussion tables and establish a clear legal framework, with clear roles and responsibilities for all parties involved in negotiations. And it will allow the government, as the funder of the public education system in Ontario, to have a prescribed role at the negotiating table where it can bargain directly.

The relationship between all parties involved in education sector negotiations has grown more complex, and we need a process that reflects that increased complexity.

In addition to providing the government with a clear role at the central table, there is a newly prescribed role for central employer bargaining agencies: to negotiate legally enforceable provincial agreements on behalf of all school boards. This recognizes the important role of trustee associations in this process. As for individual school boards, they would remain the legal employer and continue to negotiate local agreements that would address local matters.

Speaker, this proposed legislation is of vital importance because virtually all collective agreements in the education sector expire in August 2014. That is why we need the provisions of this bill in place well before next August. The next round of bargaining is around the corner, and a structure that recognizes the government's role at the table, along with the trustee associations representing school boards and the provincial unions, will be essential.

0910

Speaker, the proposed model for labour negotiations would establish two processes for negotiations: a central table for significant province-wide issues and a local table at each school board to address local issues. Negotiations would take place at each level, guaranteeing that all issues, whether large or small, would be discussed in a clear, consistent and focused manner.

The central bargaining table would see the negotiation of key issues with province-wide impact, such as compensation. Issues that affect the implementation of education policy or that could result in significant costs for one or more school boards can also be negotiated centrally. Management representation at central tables would be made up of both the government and the provincial trustee associations. Employees, of course, would continue to be represented by their provincial unions or federations.

In the case of local bargaining, the structure would remain the same, as it currently exists, describing local bargaining. Local issues would continue to be bargained

by local school boards and local employee representatives, and would be allowed to happen concurrently with central bargaining. The provisions of centrally negotiated agreements, combined with locally negotiated provisions, will make up the final collective agreement.

This new structure, if passed, would enshrine for the first time a clear, legally defined role for government at central tables. It only makes sense that since the government has a strong interest and obligation in the outcome of negotiations, it should likewise have a formal role at the central table.

Another big difference from the previous process is the creation of legally recognized central voices for school boards. Historically, there was no legal status for the trustee associations to provide central representation for the school boards. This now needs to change to better reflect today's reality.

We are also proposing changes to the ratification process. This is one of the more innovative aspects of this legislation: three-party ratification for central bargaining. This means that a central settlement, which will be part of the collective agreement, will only be reached if all three parties—government, trustee associations and unions—agree to it. I repeat: No central settlement can be reached without the agreement of each of these three parties.

Speaker, this is truly a made-in-Ontario approach to collective bargaining, and different from the status in any other provincial bargaining scheme, where the school boards, as represented by their associations, have no role in the ratification of the central agreement. It's a home-grown solution that shows that we listened to stakeholders who wanted clarity, accountability and consistency during bargaining.

With the proposed model, we'll have a process that ensures all parties have a clear role and are accountable during the negotiation phase, while also ensuring that everyone plays an essential role in the final outcome. Also, this process would formally recognize the trustees' role as elected representatives by naming the trustee associations as central bargaining agencies. With the newly prescribed role for government at the central table, we, as the funder of education in Ontario, will be able to bargain directly about issues that are connected to funding.

Speaker, this simply makes sense. The funder, the employers and the employee representatives will all sit at the central table, and each of those three parties will have a critical role in how and when central agreements are reached. I'm optimistic that the addition of three-party ratification will lead to a more effective and consistent bargaining process for everyone involved. It ensures that all parties are 100% clear about their role and, similarly, 100% accountable for the outcome.

I would also like to talk about how employers and employees will be represented at the central tables. The proposed legislation names the following parties as the statutory central bargaining agencies for collective bargaining for teachers: AEFO, the French teachers; ETFO,

the public elementary teachers; OECTA, the English Catholic teachers; and OSSTF, the public secondary teachers. They continue to be identified as the permanent central teacher federations. For employers, the permanent central bargaining agencies include ACEPO, which represents the public French boards; AFOCSC, which represents the Catholic French boards; the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, representing English Catholic boards; and the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, representing English public boards.

As mentioned before, this means the role of trustee associations is prescribed in the legislation. The trustee associations will be required to establish their own policy and procedures to fulfill their duties and functions as employer bargaining agents. I have full confidence in the trustee associations' ability to perform this role.

Support staff unions, such as CUPE, will also have access to central tables but on a voluntary basis. If a union representing more than 15 support staff bargaining units wishes to participate in central bargaining in any given round, the Minister of Education would have authority to designate a union or bargaining council of multiple unions to represent support staff in schools. We do anticipate that that is what would happen in most cases on the support staff side. What it means, for example, is that office staff, early childhood educators and maintenance workers, represented by unions such as CUPE, ETFO and OSSTF, would be eligible for a central bargaining table.

Once the union is designated as a central employee bargaining agency, it's the responsibility of the minister to create a central table by designating a council of trustee associations as a central employer bargaining agency. The significance of that technicality is the fact that if we think of CUPE, for example, it has bargaining units in all four school board sectors, so we need to have all four trustee associations represented at the management side of the table.

I would like to speak more about what this newly prescribed role would mean for the bargaining process. Currently, the government has only been party to voluntary central negotiations, despite having the legal responsibility for funding elementary and secondary education. This proposed legislation would change that. The government would have a direct, formal role in central negotiations and will work to coordinate all central tables. The province would work with the trustee associations to set the bargaining mandate for the management side at the central tables, and it would help determine which issues would be bargained centrally. Of course, with three-party ratification being a requirement, the crown also plays an essential role in ratifying the central agreements. But to be clear, the government would continue to have no role in local bargaining. The proposed model continues to respect the existing local collective bargaining process as the best process for addressing purely local matters.

With the introduction of a new structure, this legislation, if passed, would require all parties to agree on which issues will be negotiated centrally versus locally.

This will be determined at the outset of the bargaining process before negotiations begin and could vary from contract to contract, from round to round, even from table to table. This makes sense, as we need to know which issues will be negotiated at which bargaining table before negotiations can begin.

While the issues to be negotiated at each table are not dictated by the legislation, there are some general guidelines. In general, major monetary items and items with major policy implications would be discussed at the central table, and the Minister of Education would have authority to reserve certain matters for the central table. Such matters would include those that could have a significant impact on the implementation of provincial education policies or a significant impact on the expenditures of one or more school boards.

0920

The proposed legislation also provides a process to resolve an impasse over what issues will be bargained centrally. If, after a fixed period of time, all parties cannot agree on what issues will be bargained centrally or locally, any party may turn to the Ontario Labour Relations Board for a final decision. This means that no issue can be negotiated at both the central and local tables in a particular round of bargaining. It has to be one or the other table.

As I have stated, this innovative legislation would require three-party ratification at the central table, and ratification between employers and employees at the local level. Any resulting collective agreement would be comprised of the centrally negotiated terms and the locally negotiated terms, but local terms would obviously apply only to the specific school board for which they were negotiated.

The duration of education sector collective agreements are also prescribed in this proposed legislation. Collective agreements can only be set to terms of two, three or four years in length, while common expiry dates will be retained; that is, the August 31 expiry date that we currently are using. These pre-set terms are also part of our goal to establish a clear and consistent process for all parties involved.

Speaker, with the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, we are proposing a framework to move beyond past challenges and to look into the future. We want to build on the work we accomplished at the voluntary central tables and establish new rules for all parties involved in the process. This clarity, consistency and efficiency will improve negotiations and help put previous challenges behind us. That has been a top priority for me since becoming Minister of Education: to rebuild the relationships with our stakeholders and to move forward. That is why we have worked very hard, over many months, to get feedback from key education stakeholders.

Speaker, this made-in-Ontario approach to collective bargaining was developed through extensive consultation with our education partners. Five informal rounds of consultation took place this past summer and early fall with trustee associations, teacher federations and support staff

unions. This valuable input helped shape this proposed bill, and we included elements in this legislation that were asked for directly by education stakeholders, both trustee associations and unions.

We heard in those discussions that a return to purely local bargaining is not a viable option. Nearly everyone we consulted also raised a number of key points on the role of employers and the government at the central table. We heard that the trustee associations should be the statutory bargaining agency for employers, with the legal authority to bind local school boards to a central agreement. We also heard that the crown should have a clearly prescribed role. We heard that employer bargaining agents needed to have the ability to bind their member boards to provincially negotiated agreements. And we heard that, since the government funds education in Ontario, it should participate directly in negotiations over the terms and conditions of employment.

All parties we consulted supported a bargaining structure that included central and local tables, and virtually all parties agreed that major monetary items should be negotiated at a central table. At the same time, it was agreed that mechanisms should be in place to ensure that local bargaining remains meaningful. We also heard that central and local issues should be agreed upon by all parties at the beginning of each round and not prescribed in legislation. And, finally, everyone we consulted supported access to provincial negotiations for support staff.

Speaker, this is not just our government's proposed legislation; this is a made-in-Ontario approach to improving collective bargaining in this process. We did listen to our stakeholders, we valued their input and we heard what they asked for. While it's impossible to satisfy everyone with every clause in one piece of legislation, we do believe that the proposed legislation balances the interests of all parties and proposes a model that responds to the unique characteristics of Ontario's education system. That is why we are confident that this legislation will help modernize collective bargaining in the education sector. It's a bill that reflects our need to find a better way to negotiate, and it's a bill that reflects and respects the needs of our stakeholders and of all Ontarians.

Speaker, I've outlined why we need this legislation, what it will do and how it will help improve relationships with our education partners. It's a bill that helps build on the great progress we have made in education. It's a bill that will bring clarity and consistency to provincial-level bargaining for publicly funded education, and it will do this by establishing a framework for negotiations that will replace previous discussions that were voluntary. It will do this by allowing all parties in negotiations to work together and work toward a common goal. That is why we are proposing this new model for negotiations.

As I've said, the voluntary process we engaged in previously at the provincial level created challenges. Now is the time to adopt a new model, a new process, where everyone has a formalized role at the central table. This is essential as we remain in fiscally challenging times.

The current method of collective bargaining may have worked better when school boards had taxation powers,

and during periods when investments in education were increasing. But in these times of fiscal constraints, we need a model that encourages creative, collaborative discussions where everybody works together to find solutions to challenging issues.

As mentioned, Mr. Speaker, the next round of bargaining is approaching fast. Current contracts in the education sector expire in August 2014, meaning that the collective bargaining process will need to begin early next year. That is why it is so important to have the provisions of the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act in place before the next round of bargaining. It is critical that we have this new process in place quickly, to ensure that everyone at the bargaining table has an opportunity to put in place the structures that would be required to successfully implement the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

The School Boards Collective Bargaining Act will help establish such a process, and I look forward to the support of all the members of this House on this very important piece of legislation. By passing this groundbreaking bill, we can deliver a made-in-Ontario approach that improves the way we negotiate in the education sector.

Speaker, in the spirit of partnership, I urge all MPPs to stand up and do what's best for our education system. Without question, we need a collective bargaining process that is clear and consistent for everyone, and the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act will help us do just that.

Thank you, Speaker, and I'm now going to share my time with my parliamentary assistant.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Scarborough–Rouge River.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to add my comments in support of the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

As the minister pointed out, this proposed legislation needs to be in place before the next round of negotiations. We are proposing this bill to help formalize in legislation the relationships with the educational partners as it relates to collective bargaining. This will help build on the great progress we've made in education, in a system that is already recognized as being among the best in the world. We are seeing great results, results that we can all be proud of. These accomplishments are directly tied to the hard work and dedication shown by our teachers, students and school administrators each and every school year. These are the people who help Ontario lead the pack in publicly funded education.

0930

Since 2003, Ontario has made great strides in helping students succeed and reach their full potential. This has given our province an international reputation for innovation and excellence, and rightly so. I'm very proud of our sterling record on education. It is a record that has delivered tremendous results for our province.

While there are many ingredients that have contributed to our success, we are always guided by three core pri-

orities: increasing student achievement; closing the gaps in achievement for students struggling within our system; and increasing confidence in publicly funded education. Since 2003, these core principles have delivered very positive improvements. In 2002-03, only 54% of children in grades 3 and 6 were achieving the provincial standard in reading, writing and math. That number has jumped to 71% of children in grades 3 and 6 meeting the provincial standard in literacy and numeracy. This is an impressive increase of 17 percentage points since 2003.

Similarly, our graduation rate is up significantly. In 2003, only 68% of our students were graduating, but now that number stands at 83%. That is a 15 percentage point increase in this short time. This means that over the past 10 years, an additional 115,500 students have graduated who would not have if the graduation rate remained at the 2003 level. We have come a long way in the last decade, and we have our educators, students, parents and many community partners to thank for these great improvements in student achievement in our school system.

As I mentioned, Ontario's publicly funded education system is one of the best in the world. Time and time again, international studies show this to be true. Scholars from around the world, including Australia, China, Denmark, Japan, Sweden, India, Finland, Northern Ireland, the Bahamas, Germany and the United States, have visited our great province to learn of our success. That worldwide excellence was evident in 2012 when Ontario was once again recognized as a leader in education.

A report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD, explained that our government's emphasis on solid education has achieved real, positive results towards increasing literacy and numeracy comprehension, improving graduation rates and reducing the number of low-performing schools. This adds to the previous OECD reports that ranked Ontario students among the best in the world at meeting or exceeding international standards. Speaker, this is astounding progress.

Of course, one of our proudest achievements has been full-day kindergarten—one of the most significant transformations in our education system in a generation. We are giving students the best possible start with full-day kindergarten, the benefits of which can last a lifetime and lead to a successful future.

Full-day kindergarten continues to roll out as planned and is now offered in approximately 2,600 schools across the province. That means that about 184,000 of Ontario's four- and five-year-olds are benefiting from full-day kindergarten this school year.

By September 2014, full-day kindergarten will be available to all of Ontario's four- and five-year-olds. We know full-day kindergarten is worth it because the program is already producing great results. But full-day kindergarten is just one way we are transforming our world-class education system.

We're also working hard at the elementary level. There, we've looked at new ways of improving literacy and numeracy, and we're also focusing on the develop-

ment of higher-order skills. Creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving skills are all part of our modern world. This means that educators increasingly have to teach students how to use information to think independently.

At the secondary level, we're helping students gain real-life, hands-on experience in the workplace. Students gain valuable experience in co-op programs, while earning credits towards their high school diploma. Our Specialist High Skills Major program means students can match their personal interests and skills with a career path.

Seven years ago, when we launched the Specialist High Skills Major program, 600 students enrolled. This year, more than 42,000 students are in the program. These priorities are benefiting Ontario students and putting them on a solid path to success. But we recognize that our work is not done.

We must ensure that we continue on this road to success. That is why we're looking at ways to take our education system from great to excellent. We must continue to raise the bar and take student achievement to new heights. To this end, we are currently engaged in consultations around the province on the next phase of our education strategy.

Our world is rapidly changing, and the evolution of technology is creating a greater demand on our system. So we have been asking education stakeholders and non-traditional stakeholders for their ideas. We have been leading, hosting and encouraging provincial, regional and community discussions to create an updated vision of our education system. This direct feedback has been invaluable.

We are hearing from a wide range of sectors, from education to business, not-for-profit, research and innovation, and more. This diversity of perspectives and wide range of opinions will help us identify ways to take our education system even further. We want to know how front-line educators envision our education system over the next 10 years. We want to hear from business leaders on what they expect from the next generation.

Parents, volunteer organizations and our aboriginal partners, among many others, are also contributing to this exciting new vision. Of course, we're hearing from students, for whom everything we do in education is focused—to help them succeed in school and far beyond.

These consultations will help build a powerful future for education in Ontario, a future that depends on all of us to ensure we continue to live in a prosperous Ontario. Most of that prosperity is tied to the investments we continue to make in our education system by supporting it with stable funding.

The Ministry of Education, with an overall budget of \$25 billion, is the second-largest ministry, and provides a vital public service to all Ontarians. As part of our commitment to full-day kindergarten, we're providing about \$963 million for the 2013-14 school year to support the ongoing rollout of full-day kindergarten. This combined investment of the Grants for Student Needs and full-day

kindergarten is almost \$22 billion, but our current fiscal reality means everyone in the public sector needs to be financially responsible.

0940

School boards are benefiting from funding that has increased by \$6.4 billion, or 44%, since 2003, and per-pupil funding now sits at \$11,200, an increase of more than \$4,000, or 56%, since 2003.

We also continue to make sound capital investments in our schools and communities. Since 2003, our government has provided \$11.6 billion in capital funding to school boards, including funding to support 610 new schools that have either been opened or planned or are under way currently. This funding helps build new schools or expand, refurbish or repair older schools being renovated, closed or replaced. We're also investing in green schools that use modern, environmentally friendly technologies. We will continue to make these investments so our schools can provide the best possible learning environments to support students' success.

Nevertheless, we must also remain mindful of our current fiscal climate. We live in a time of global economic uncertainty, where we have to count our coins and stretch our dollars.

That brings me back to this proposed legislation, where we are looking to establish a new model of collective bargaining in the education sector. As the minister said, if passed, it would provide a made-in-Ontario approach to labour negotiations, with clear and accountable roles for all parties involved in collective bargaining.

Since the government funds education in Ontario, it puts us at the central table, where issues tied to funding are discussed. This will be essential as we move forward in our time of financial constraints. We need to protect our world-class education and find a better way to negotiate while working within our fiscal parameters.

As such, I urge all MPPs in this House to join Minister Sandals and myself as we support this bill. The School Boards Collective Bargaining Act is necessary and important legislation. As the minister said, we need to have this legislation in place long before August 2014. It is in everyone's best interests that it be passed and in place before this next round of bargaining.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Education and the parliamentary assistant, the member for—I'm just looking here right now—Scarborough—Rouge River.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the minister and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education have offered a number of points with respect to this legislation, and I particularly respect the fact that their goals are to increase student achievement, to reduce the gap between underperforming students and underperforming schools with the top-performing ones, and improve confidence in public education. I think that members on this side of the House certainly would applaud the government for that and agree with the government that those are worthy causes of discussion.

I know that through the course of my response—I will be having an hour lead on this. I'm going to reserve many of my comments for that period in time. But what I will say, Mr. Speaker, is it is interesting to hear that the government has presented this particular piece of legislation that focuses on the process of collective bargaining. This bill, more or less, is about process; it's not about the politics, it's not about improving test scores. It's simply about outlining and laying out a framework and a process for negotiation.

Certainly, on this side of the House, we have a number of perspectives on how to improve education. We would like to be talking about those pieces of legislation, but I know, through the course of debating Bill 122, that we will be stuck talking about the process by which collective bargaining will take place.

So there is an opportunity, I think, to talk about this process and framework, but what we really would like to talk about on this side of the House is how we can actually improve student scores, how can we actually improve the education system, which this bill simply fails to do. This is simply about process and not about improving quality of education.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise today as MPP for London West, but also as someone who has been involved in the education sector since 2000. Really, it was the chaos of Bill 115 that led me to put my name forward, to seek elected office at the provincial level and stand before you here today as MPP for London West. In my 13 years in the sector, we saw each round of collective bargaining was basically reinvented by the government, depending very much on the personality and the priorities of the minister of the day, and I don't think the sector was served well by this constant change in process.

I'm very pleased to see that there is an effort to bring forward a legal framework to guide collective bargaining and define the roles of each of the parties. It's especially important to give provincial trustee associations a formal legal role in the process. I think this will help very much, but we also have to be very cautious. I heard both the Minister of Education and the member from Scarborough—Rouge River talking about the need to move expeditiously and put this legislation into place. As always, with legislation, the devil is in the details.

We need to get this legislation to committee, ensure that all stakeholders have ample time to review the legislation, to respond to the legislation, to bring forward amendments, because we absolutely owe to the students of this province a commitment not to put them into the kind of chaos that we saw last year with Bill 115. We owe it to the students of this province to have a quality public education system that is framed by a responsible collective bargaining process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I just wanted to reflect on the comments by the minister and the parliamentary assistant that, ultimately, getting this right means that we get it

right for students and parents. Really, that's the bottom line. We've got to remember that it's not just the teachers. As you know, Mr. Speaker, my father was a caretaker in the school system. The support workers are critically important because they all come together to do something that sometimes we don't pay enough attention to, day in, day out.

I visit schools regularly—I was at Baycrest school in my riding the other day—just to see the incredible care that the staff and teachers take for our kids. I've got Forest Hill Collegiate. It's as good as any high school in the country. I've got Dante Alighieri high school. The kids have been in 20 portables for the last 15 years, yet the teachers and staff carry on and take care of these kids.

Sure, our education system always needs improvement. We know that. But the amazing thing is that the tens of thousands of teachers, support staff and the parent councils, the CSACs, are doing this on a regular basis. This is our attempt to make sure there's a framework where the schools work for the community, for the students, for the parents. That's why this framework has to be connected to the kids and to the workers in the schools in a way that's fair. I think the minister has spent a lot of time—she has got a proven track record of working in our schools. She has a real love of our schools and our kids. I think we've got to try to find a way of building this proper framework, and I think that's what this is about, in terms of everyday people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm happy to provide my two minutes on the leadoff for Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. I know that I'll listen with interest as my colleague Rob Leone, the member from Cambridge, who I know has dove deep into this issue as the new critic for education, enlightens members of this House as well as Ontarians on where we stand with regard to this issue.

0950

I think, first, it's quite unanimous that our intent here is to ensure that our kids get the highest quality of education possible in the province of Ontario to ensure that they've got a bright future ahead of them. Education is an important part of that. I will say that not only what happens in the classroom is important, but outside the classroom, after hours or even before the school day starts, is an important aspect.

I recall the students that I had into my office last fall, who were denied a lot of those extracurricular activities that are so important to a part of their school day. You know what? Some strong students who organized their colleagues and wrote letters to the minister came to see me in my office and said, "Hey, don't use us as bargaining chips here." These are important activities. I know students who were preparing to go to college getting a bit of extra help in the morning or those participating in after-school activities who were really shut out from that, while their counterparts on the Catholic side were able to continue those extracurricular activities.

We talked about clearing the decks and bringing forward a jobs plan that would address jobs and the economy. We know we have a major situation there. We talked about amending reg 274, something that's extremely important to ensure that the best teachers are in the classroom and that when hiring is on the books, those folks get the best possible education they can.

Thanks for the opportunity. I'll await the member—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The Minister of Education has two minutes.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the members from Cambridge, London West, Eglinton—Lawrence and Kitchener—Conestoga.

I want to focus on what the member from London West had to say, because her observations were quite correct, that the provincial discussion tables were an ad hoc arrangement, an ad hoc process—that each process was different. I can assure her, because I, too, was a trustee, that before we went to provincial discussion tables, the process was also quite difficult, the time when we were doing local bargaining in the years between losing taxation rights and attempting to do a provincial discussion table.

So I think what we're both reflecting is that there is frustration in the system with a process that's legally fine but that doesn't match reality, and that that frustration is shared by the unions, it's shared by the school boards and it's shared, quite frankly, by the government.

In response to the member from Cambridge, that's actually why we have put so much effort into the process. I do need to assure you that the consultations that we did with both the unions and the trustee associations were very much focused on the details of exactly how this legislation works. We have been talking here today about the broad strokes, but there's been a lot of discussion going into every clause and how every detail of this should work.

For my colleague from Eglinton—Lawrence, thank you for recognizing the support staff, because the education workers are also an important part of this scheme. They too can have access to the central table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's good to have an opportunity to speak to this bill, Bill 122. It is certainly an improvement over Bill 115. I know that many Liberal MPPs are relieved with Bill 122 because it is an attempt to reach out once again to the teachers, who they hurt badly under Bill 115. I know that many Liberal MPPs were profoundly nervous about what had happened and that they had broken the wonderful relationship they had with teachers that they had built for a long, long time.

Recall, Speaker, that the former Premier was touted as the education Premier. That is what he wanted to be known as. His wife was a teacher, of course. He himself had a love for teaching, teachers, children, and when they came out with Bill 115, most of the members were horrified—

Mr. John Yakabuski: You have to stand down the lead. Say, "I'd like to stand down the lead," or you're—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's exactly what I thought we had to do.

Speaker, with your indulgence, can we have unanimous consent to stand down our lead, please?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Trinity-Spadina has asked for consent to stand down the lead. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Continue.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you very much, Speaker. These are the rules that we normally follow. I didn't know how they could have been done any differently.

You will recall that the Premier was the education guy. Imagine the horror of this opposition party. Imagine the horror felt by so many Liberal members who themselves are teachers, who themselves were close to the teaching profession, some of whom might have been school trustees as well. They just couldn't quite understand how they could have moved away from virtually 10 years of good relationships with the teachers to bring down a bill that essentially violated that relationship with the teaching profession and disrespected school boards—because they obviously overrode the agreements, overrode the powers of school boards, overrode and dismissed the relationship they ought to have with the federations, and they did get punished here and there, and they felt it. Each and every one felt it.

What I said in a speech that I made—it seems quite a long time ago—is: Why would you do that? Why would Liberals do that? Why would the then-Premier do that, and why would that caucus allow the Premier and others, whoever they are, to do that? It made absolutely no sense.

I understand how things work. I know that the Premier has tremendous power. We know that. And we know that the chief of staff of the Premier has tremendous power. Between the two of them, the power is immense. It is absolutely immense. It's possible that one or two cabinet ministers—maybe three—have some influence on the Premier, but on the whole, they have none. Where others might say, "But where were you?"—and they do say that: "Where were you? You could have said no. You could have resigned." You could have insisted that Bill 115 was wrong, and together you would have been mighty; if you had 30 or 40 of you saying no, the Premier would have had to back off. So the question is: What happened?

Mr. Mike Colle: Like Bob Rae.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Similarly. Similarly. People could say that of the social contract as well—absolutely true. Which is why I say to the Minister of the Environment, because he's always the one who reminds us of these things, "Have you learned nothing from that experience?" That's the point I make.

It doesn't mean that if you had a bad experience 20 years ago, you could then do the same and learn nothing from bad experiences. The idea is that you learn from something that was truly difficult, problematic, for politicians and the professions that were affected by it—

Hon. James J. Bradley: "Social contract." Say the words.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That was the one.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Say the words.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That was the one.

Interjection: He won't say it.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I obviously don't want to hurt someone who's a friend of yours and was going to be the leader of the federal Liberal Party. Clearly, it would not be useful to hurt you even more. The point is to learn from the past.

Bill 115 was truly damaging to you, and it was good that it damaged you, because what you did is to simply overwrite contracts. Contracts meant nothing. What you did was to simply—but I just told you that you had a lesson from 20 years ago.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Good judgment is based on past experience.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Good judgment is based on past experience, and the point is that you learned nothing from it. The idea was that you treat the federations with respect, that you have them at the table, and you treat school boards with respect, and you have them at the table. With Bill 115, you did not do that.

1000

You're trying to recover lost ground, and I understand. God bless; it's good that you're doing it. Now you've got the federations onside, so to speak, at least having them at the table. That is good. You have the boards onside, which is good. So you have them on board, so to speak, at the table, which is good. And at least you're able to, hopefully, negotiate reasonably, amicably, respectfully with the teacher federations and the boards of education. It's all they want. It's all they deserve. It's all they expect.

But when I hear the member from Scarborough—Rouge River talk about all the wonderful things you've done in education, it makes me vomit, from time to time. Please, please, please. It's almost revolting. I exaggerate. Speaker, I exaggerate. I don't want to hurt them too much.

Some of you may not know, but some of the ex-Toronto trustees know this very well—I will not mention them by name or by their riding—they do know that most boards have deficits. I think you know that. The way they deal with deficits is to find various cuts to make in order to balance their budgets. What has the Toronto board done for years now? They have a maintenance budget, a capital budget, and boards of education, particularly the Toronto board, have had to raid that budget to balance the budget. What does it mean to raid the capital maintenance budget? It means our schools are falling apart. It's like the Dufferin line, that has no clean buses going up Dufferin. It's similar to that, right?

Mr. Mike Colle: All the smog.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What would it take, to help the member from Eglinton—Lawrence, to bring some clean buses going up Eglinton so that he doesn't have to suffer the smoke of—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I've been unusually lenient for myself today, and it's getting out of hand. The member knows that he has to go through me and not have conversations across the floor with the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, and the member from Eglinton–Lawrence knows better, especially being the veterans you are. So let's have a little decorum—a great word, I know—in the House. I'd appreciate a little quiet, because the Speaker is getting a little upset about this. Thank you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, if you noticed, I am making a tremendous effort to look at you as often as I can; I am. While you were looking away, I was looking at you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I must admit, from past experience, the member from Trinity–Spadina has improved immensely with his ability to go through the Chair. And I love it when you look at me.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's what I was doing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thanks very much.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And I just wanted to emphasize the tremendous effort that I have made. So while I was distracted momentarily, I had to look at him briefly, but I quickly turned to you, as you might have noticed, because of the respect I have for the Chair and your position, of course.

Speaker, the point that I make to the minister and to the member from Scarborough–Rouge River is that we have tremendous fiscal problems at the boards level. So the Toronto board raids their budgets, the maintenance budgets and their capital budgets, on a yearly basis to balance the budget, as they try to maintain their dollars for essential programs that they deem to be important for the board of education. What it means is that elementary and secondary schools are falling apart. It is important for some of you—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I was distracted.

It is important for some of the members to actually do a little visit of some of their schools in Scarborough—that would be useful—and in the old Toronto. I think it would be very, very useful, because, remember, the old Toronto is old schools, and if we don't repair them, they are in serious trouble.

So for years, we have taken from that budget to balance our budgets because, by law, boards have to balance their budgets, and to do that, they have to take money from different programs, rob-Peter-to-pay-for-Paul kind of programming. That's what has been happening for years. Boards have raided the ESL programming for years. I remember the then minister, Monsieur Kennedy, who gave \$120 million for ESL, and it was understood that that money could be raided by boards in order to be able to balance their budgets and move money around, and it didn't go directly to all those needy kids coming from different countries, who desperately needed ESL. How do you square that? How do you defend that? You could say money is going to ESL, and you could say

loads of money are going to boards, but the money isn't there—money desperately needed for needy children, who don't get the ESL.

The French language program: They don't get the dollars that they deserve either. Money is raided from that program as well, to be able to balance their budgets. Music programs have been devastated. We used to have, a long time ago, what we used to call gym teachers, that are now called physical education teachers. We used to have a heck of a lot more physical education teachers, and we needed them. We needed them then, and we need them desperately now, because young kids are overweight—some are obese. We desperately need to get kids moving, and we need teachers who have knowledge of how you teach kids health, what we eat and so on, but physical health in particular. And now only 30% to 34% of our schools have physical education teachers. That is a serious deficiency in our system, and why is that so? Because of underfunding.

If you don't have the funding, you cut away, you chip away at various programs that are important. I am a big supporter of full-time JK and SK—a big supporter of that program. Our party talked about this in the 1999 election as a very important thing to do. We don't shy away from its importance, but what I said then was that if you don't invest properly, there are going to be problems in that program, and that will hurt the program, not help it or save it.

Principals were very, very nervous about it because more responsibilities were put on their heads and their shoulders, and they knew that once that program came in, they would have to find the dollars to fund that program, because the program is not adequately funded. The government quickly moved in to put those programs where there was space, and when there was no space any longer, they had to scramble to deal with the problems that they faced in schools where they had to build additional space for those children. That's why we still don't have a program that is fully complete. Where you have full-time JK and SK, you don't have a seamless program in the morning and in the evening. That problem is everywhere across Ontario. Most parents cannot afford the early child care and the late child care, which means some parents are using it if they can afford it, and some are not. That's a serious problem. So that seamless day that was supposed to happen in the schools is not happening.

We have tremendous problems in our system, and while this government, in 10 years, has made some effort to improve our educational system, we have a long, long way to go to make it the best possible system that we can have.

We talk about math. Math is another issue that we have not addressed as a government, and I am one of the few who believes that we should bring specialized teachers into grades 7 and 8, because it is incredibly important that we have teachers who are experts in the field to be able to pass on that important skill to the kids. If the kids are afraid of math and they don't learn it properly, half of

the possibilities in our lives are eliminated by the mere fact that we don't have the math skills. So I'm a big fan of having specialized teachers in grades 7 and 8, and to the extent that we can bring in more specialized teachers teaching math, it is something that we should be looking at. It's another issue of big concern that I believe we should be addressing, and until we do that, I don't know that we've done the job.

1010

Bill 122 is a bill that obviously has brought the stakeholders together, and that includes the federations and includes the boards. They, I suspect, might have some questions based on the legal component of this bill and/or other elements. Clearly, they, and we, want to bring this bill into committee for debate and discussion, and we want to be able to hear from them and others about what they think is good about this bill and what they think might need improvement. But this goes a long way to improve what we had by way of Bill 115. It goes a long way to improve the relationship between the federations and the school boards and the government, and I believe this is a good thing.

So I'm looking forward to having hearings on this bill, Speaker, and I'm happy to have had the opportunity to speak to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 122. I heard intently this morning the Minister of Education kick off her remarks about Bill 122. As a former school board trustee before I came to the House, Mr. Speaker, I can speak of one item that's so important to my constituents in Scarborough—Agincourt. Education is the foundation of the growth of this province. Through Bill 122, it will provide, as the minister talked about, a made-in-Ontario model framework to talk about protecting the public education system that we know we're so proud of across the province.

My colleague from Scarborough—Rouge River, the parliamentary assistant to the minister, also spoke eloquently this morning about the success and the gains we have made for over 10 years in terms of public education.

I know that the member opposite from Trinity-Spadina does not want to echo those comments, but I can tell you that the reading and numeracy numbers—it's factual. The fact that our schools are leading the way in terms of internationally—we are all proud of our public education system.

Through Bill 122, we address the whole issue of how to continue to move forward in public education, to make sure the system is strong and stable and to address the issue of collective agreements, and we will be having two-tiered bargaining. There will be a central tier. At the same time, we will also have a local tier to allow the local school board, along with their employees, to bargain local issues.

The other piece here is that the minister spoke very passionately this morning, as well as the parliamentary assistant, about the time sensitivity of this particular bill.

We all know in this House that August 2014 will be upon us, and it's incumbent on this House and this chamber to pass some type of legislation to provide the framework for the next round of bargaining.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob Leone: I want to congratulate the member from Trinity-Spadina on his remarks today. I know that he and I shared a very special moment on Monday afternoon while we were looking for some Italian cheeses. We had a road trip, and he showed me the goods on Corso Italia and Little Italy. I very much appreciated that outing, and I appreciate that we're going to be doing it again.

Mr. Speaker, I think the member from Trinity-Spadina raises a number of important points. One of the key points that he made is a point that I would echo, in that this is a very highly technical bill, a bill that likely will have labour lawyers debating the nitty-gritty and the technical aspects of the bill, but ignoring largely some of the policy objectives that the member has outlined. Particularly, I know he referenced the declining math scores that are in our schools. I think, perhaps maybe with a bit of disappointment, he is suggesting that we could be talking about those items which, because this is a technical bill, we won't be debating very much at all.

This is an important aspect. I think there are a lot of issues in education. I think that providing the rules and formalizing the negotiation—obviously, it's very important for all parties to understand and listen. But I get the sense that the member from Trinity-Spadina would like to be talking about other issues with respect to education, and he wants to move on addressing some of the concerns that he has, not only for the system as a whole, but those issues that are particular to his riding and to the municipality and city of Toronto in which he lives.

So I look forward to participating in this debate, and I want to thank the member for his comments today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I wanted to comment on some of the remarks that were made by the member for Trinity-Spadina. He's obviously a very passionate advocate for public education and someone who has seen a lot of change in education over his years here in this Legislature.

I think he raised a really important point when he spoke about ESL and the importance of ESL in his riding. What that really reflects is some of the differences between school boards in terms of the priorities they place on local issues. I think that one of the challenges we may see in this legislation is around the definition of what is a central issue and what is a local issue, particularly when it comes to funding. We know that school boards across this province are all very different. They have very different sets of priorities. Sometimes, what boards want to advance at the local level as a local priority requires provincial funding. We need to ensure that there is an appropriate process in place to allow that

definition of what is a central issue and what is a local issue.

I'm pleased that the legislation includes that opportunity because that is going to be very important to the province moving forward in terms of having a fair collective bargaining process.

Once again, I want to say on behalf of our party that we believe that this framework is necessary. We would like to hear what stakeholders have to say as it moves forward to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I must say, in response to the member from Trinity–Spadina, I share his passion for looking at teaching math. That's also something that we are looking at, although that doesn't require legislation. What we're debating here today is Bill 122, a change in the legal labour relations framework for the education sector, which does require legislation.

But somewhere in the member's comments, he did say something quite relevant, which was the observation that school boards are not legally able to run a deficit. From a technical point of view, that is because if a school board does run a deficit, it is actually reflected back on the province's books and increases the province's deficit, which is why that prohibition is there. But that's very relevant to this discussion because the reason that the government has come up with these various forms of voluntary provincial discussion tables is that when you looked at just simply doing local bargaining absent taxation power, it made local bargaining almost impossible because the school boards didn't know how much money they would have beyond a one-year GSN announcement. The unions obviously would have liked to get raises periodically, and it's awfully hard to figure out how to give a raise that won't cause a deficit if you don't know how much money you're going to have, which is why both the boards and the unions said, "Government, we need you at the table because you're the only people who know how much money you're willing to spend."

So the comment from the member for Trinity–Spadina about school board deficits and school board financing is actually absolutely essential to understanding why we're doing what we're doing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Trinity–Spadina has two minutes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. I was very sad when a previous government, in the past, removed the power of local levees, because local levees allowed boards to be able to reflect their own needs in their own areas. When the government that shall remain unnamed did that and centralized education financing, that took away local power. It took away the powers to be able to negotiate even agreements with unions in a way that reflected their own needs. And once power was centralized, it gave so much influence to the provincial government.

For all intents and purposes, we've had provincial negotiations for the last 10 years, really, under the Con-

servative government and under the Liberals. For a long, long time there was the sense that perhaps we were negotiating locally, but really the power lies on central governments, and that is scary sometimes. It can be hurtful.

I was reminded about the needs of our special education kids. This is a growing, growing phenomenon and a growing problem. So many of our kids are not getting the special attention they deserve. So many of our kids are now into the regular classroom without educational assistant support. It is unbelievably difficult, and I don't know how families are making do. I don't know how teachers survive it, really, because it's hard to teach a classroom where there are no needs and then all of a sudden you've got four or five kids in your classroom with specialized needs that you can't deal with on your own. Teachers are doing that at the primary level. We have many, many difficulties we need to address. This bill addresses some problems of fixing Bill 115. God bless. I'm happy to debate that.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. It being 10:20, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1021 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like the members of the Legislature to look to the visitors' gallery. I want to introduce my constituents Clint Cole, Stan Kuzma, Jim Sullivan and Pedro Pelletier, who are members of the Clarington transformer group. I welcome them to Queen's Park. They're having a video this afternoon, if you want to join us at 2 o'clock.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd like to welcome Filomena Ferraro from the York region OECA to today's proceedings. Welcome, Filomena.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: This is an exciting day in the Legislature, as I'm joining the Ontario Mining Association in hosting our annual Meet the Miners Day here at Queen's Park, an annual tradition going back 25 years.

We have a number of important members of the mining industry in the gallery, and I want to introduce them: Kelly Strong from Vale, and also the Ontario Mining Association chair of the board; Rowland Howe from Sifto—welcome, Rowland; Larry Sparks from Omya Canada; and Tess Lofsky from North American Palladium. Did I mention Duncan Middlemiss—I don't believe I did—from St Andrew Goldfields? Thank you very much—and Phil Bousquet, who is manager of industrial and government relations with the Mining Association. Welcome, all of you. It's going to be a great day.

May I say, Mr. Speaker, that there's a reception this evening in rooms 228 and 230 from 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., and we invite all the members of the Legislature to join us there this evening.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You may not say that.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to welcome to the gallery today my friend and former colleague Rae Gropper. She is an education and health consultant who works with the Association of Canadian Community Colleges.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to welcome Alex Wellstead to Queen's Park today. Alex is a constituency assistant in my Oakville office.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I'm delighted to introduce, in the east members' gallery, Kelly McGiffin from First-Ontario Credit Union; and from Central 1 Credit Union Helmut Pastrick, Kelly Harris and Katie Rochefort. I welcome them to the gallery and welcome them to Queen's Park. I hope they have a great day.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to introduce Dave Bryans, the CEO of the Ontario Convenience Stores Association, as well as Ron Funk, who is the chair of the board of directors of the Ontario Convenience Stores Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport—for page Sarhan Shafaque: her mother, Masoom Shafaque, and father, Abdul Shafaque, are here in the galleries. On behalf of the minister, thank you very much for joining us today.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: A number of people have joined us from the Fort Erie area. They're arriving now. As I mention their names, I'm sure they'll be taking their seats: Jim Thibert, general manager of the Fort Erie Race Track; Ted Mansell, executive vice-president of SEIU Local 2; Elissa Blowe; Harry Eder; Jackie Eder; Braydon Eder; Justine Eder; Kayla Alderson; Ryan Alderson; Claudia Whalen; Henry Whalen; Conner Whalen; Miranda Whalen; Michelle Crawford and Drake Crawford—all wonderful people involved with the Fort Erie horse racing track.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier on the motion that we've tabled with the Chair. I do want to say, in light of the Premier's position on Bill 74—I've been in politics for a long time. I've seen people take two sides on an issue. I've never in my life seen somebody take three sides on an issue, and that's not the kind of leadership we need in the province.

It's just further evidence that we definitely need change in our province. We've seen the cancellation of the Oakville gas plant, the \$1.1 billion to put forward the interests of the Liberal Party ahead of the taxpayers. We've seen 10 months of indecision. We've seen 36 panels.

I've just got to ask the question: In light of the lack of decisions, except to save Liberal seats, why should we trust you to run the province of Ontario for even one more single day?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Before I call the Premier, I'm going to make mention of the fact that I'm hearing something that you know I don't like to hear, and you will be reminded for all of you. You mention people by their riding or by their title. I will not tolerate anything else.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yesterday, I had the privilege of being at Centennial College and being part of an announcement about an investment into a program that is going to allow young people to get experience in the aerospace industry, which is an absolutely leading and important industry in this province. In fact, 14 of 25 manufacturers in the aerospace industry—14 of 25 in the world are here in Ontario. That investment in a facility at Downsview Park is going to play to our strengths as a province.

I would have thought that the Leader of the Opposition would have been supportive of that kind of job creator, that kind of investment in people and infrastructure that is going to help the economy. It's going to help people get into the economy. It's going to create jobs. I would have thought that he would have been supportive of that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, I just want to see a government that's not corrupt. I want to see a government that's not morally bankrupt, that's what I want—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm just going to caution: Let's stay away from the kind of language that could be inflammatory. I would ask the member to follow that request.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier continues to put the interests of the Liberal Party ahead of the interests of hard-working taxpayers. We put a motion on the floor of the House to say that we simply cannot trust the Liberals to run the province of Ontario. Clearly, that's what I hear from Ontarians around this province. We're losing jobs. We're losing more manufacturing jobs in Hamilton. We have folks at the Fort Erie Race Track who are facing closure and, quite frankly—despite the NDP protest—that track would not be closing without the support of the NDP for the Liberals over and over and over again.

So the question is, if the NDP actually suddenly agrees with us instead of siding with the Liberals in each and every vote, if they say they're on the side of Ontario families and agree with us that we can't trust the Liberal government, instead of being patsies for the Liberals, will you then say, "Let's go to the people; let's actually let them decide. We can forge forward to a better Ontario."

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What we want to do on this side of the House is give people the opportunity to get the training that they need, make sure that communities have the infrastructure that they need, so that we can continue to bring business to the province. We want an economy that's going to thrive. We have a plan to make those investments, and we are executing that plan.

What we are not going to do is make a 180-degree turn and cancel the services that people need, fire work-

ers, close hospitals, close schools. We have done that. So the reality—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs, come to order. The member from Nepean—Carleton, come to order. The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, come to order, and I'll catch the rest of you the next time around.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The public policies that we are putting in place, including those around the horse racing industry—and I know that the leader of the third party has a new-found interest in horse racing in Fort Erie, but the reality is that the public policy that was in place, as a result of their government, was not transparent. It was not accountable. It had to be changed. We have changed it, and my hope is that the race tracks across the province will have a sustainable future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, frankly, the Premier caused the crisis, and she signed the document that sold the province down the river to the tune of \$1.1 billion—and quite frankly, the NDP sold their soul to prop you up.

1040

Here's the reality across the province: Hydro rates have doubled; we've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs; people are worried about keeping their job, let alone the pay raise that they need in this province in the private sector; the horse racing industry is in jeopardy. The reality is, to get anything done, you need two parties in our Legislature to support that agenda. So far, the Liberals and the NDP have been hand in glove in driving forth its agenda that has resulted in doubling hydro rates and the closure, potentially, of racetracks across the province. If the NDP changes their mind and says, "You know what? We're actually saying enough is enough. We can't trust this Liberal government"—if they support our motion, will that mean you'll actually put the vote to the people of Ontario to decide to move forward—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to pick up on something that the Leader of the Opposition said. You know, I acknowledge that we are in fragile economic times. If you look around jurisdictions around the world, we are in fragile economic times. So I do not believe that firing 10,000 education workers and 2,000 health care workers and putting in place right-to-work legislation that would drive down workplaces to the lowest common denominator and, in fact, kill jobs—that is not the route that I believe is responsible, so we're not going to take that route. That is the route that is laid out by the Leader of the Opposition.

We believe that the investments in people and in infrastructure and in a business climate that will bring business to the province is where we should go, which is what the announcement yesterday was about. The aero-

space industry is one of our strengths. That's the kind of strategic investment that needs to be made in order for this economy to thrive. We're going to continue on that path.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm actually telling everybody to stop heckling.

New question.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question, as well, is to the Premier. Speaker, the Premier has no mandate from the people of Ontario. She is presiding over the largest political scandal in Ontario's history, and a new opinion poll says Ontarians want an election over the gas plant scandal. It says somebody should be thrown in jail over this \$1.1-billion scandal, and I believe those results, Speaker, because when I'm in Osgoode or Kars or North Gower or Nepean, the same people who are being asked in these polls are telling the same thing to me. They think they ought to be thrown in jail.

Voters have lost confidence in this Liberal Party. It seems the only person with any confidence in this Liberal Party is the leader of the New Democrats—who by the way sat idly while that party cancelled the Slots at Race-tracks Program in Fort Erie and at Rideau Carleton.

My question is, if this Legislature adopts our opposition motion next Wednesday that says that voters have lost trust in your party, will you call an election?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: You know, Mr. Speaker, it's a little bit much that the Leader of the Opposition and the members of the Progressive Conservative Party have stood up and made all this noise about wanting to clear the decks and get on with legislation involving employment, involving creating jobs for Ontarians. Right now, we have Bill 105 in front of the Legislature, Mr. Speaker, and instead of finishing the debate on Bill 105 and allowing it to proceed to the next stage, they're engaging in all sorts of efforts to delay. They're bringing forward these mischievous motions. The honourable member knows that under the standing orders of this Legislature, this is simply a stunt by the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, it's time that the opposition started to focus on jobs for the province of Ontario. Let Bill 105, which lowers taxes for small business, go through, and stop—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to go back to the Premier of Ontario, because this relates directly to the confidence and the trust the people of this province have in her.

The Forum Research poll was quite clear: People don't view them as a trusted government; they view them as a bunch of criminals. That's why it's important that

this goes to a vote. It is why it is important that this motion be listened to.

This is a Premier who would prefer to set up panels across the province, so that everyone in the province is on one, so she can feel that she's having a conversation. But what we learned in those conversations, particularly at the justice committee, is that their government is at the very root of a very corrupt scheme in Oakville and Mississauga, and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock for a moment, please. I'm trying to do my job, so I don't need armchair quarterbacks. I heard what the member said, and I'm not impressed again. We will stay away from any references to any member in this place as involved in criminality, and I'm asking the member to stay away from that.

Carry on.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks. Now that the Liberals are ignoring Ontarians and their wishes, and the NDP continues to prop them up, I'd like to know what she has promised the NDP in order to prop them up. Next Wednesday, when our party puts forward our motion, I'd really like to know, Premier—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —if you are going to listen to that motion—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock.

Be seated, please. Thank you.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, they can't have it both ways. They can't stand here in the House and say over and over again that the cancellation of the power plants was the worst thing to befall civilization since the plague or the Macarena and forget the fact that they stood up in the campaign aggressively and said, "Vote for us and the power plants will be cancelled," that their candidates had robocalls and flyers and tweets, that they went door to door saying, "Vote for a Progressive Conservative government and the plants will be cancelled."

Mr. Speaker, it was a promise they made and a promise we kept. It was a promise that was made by every single party in this Legislature, and the honourable member cannot deny that fact.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Final supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Back to the Premier of Ontario, who—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, come to order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —owes it to Ontarians to respond to the opposition's questions over a very important matter of trust and confidence. She has lost their confidence and never was able to get it in the first place because she has no mandate from the electorate.

Not only will I debunk what this government House leader has said with respect to the Oakville gas plant, I have the words from the Auditor General, as do the rest of the people of this province. You are behind that Oakville power plant cancellation. You cost the taxpayers of this province \$1.1 billion.

I want to know from the Premier's own mouth: Will she listen to our confidence motion next week? Will she tell the people of the province that she will listen to them when they don't trust her?

Premier, yes or no? Will you have the courage of your convictions to stand in your place and tell us you'll respect the vote of this House next week or not?

Hon. John Milloy: First of all, Mr. Speaker, it's not a confidence—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, second time.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: First of all, it's not a confidence motion, and the member knows that.

Mr. Speaker, I direct the member to go to the website of Mayor Rob Burton of Oakville. He has a section called "Timeline" related to this. Let me quote—you'll want to hear this.

"On September 25, 2011"—I'm quoting—"PC leader Tim Hudak says the Oakville power plant"—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Stormont.

Hon. John Milloy: —"cancellation 'cost \$1 billion' and suggests"—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Because you were yelling so loud, you didn't hear me, even with my mike on. The member from Stormont will come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: —"and suggests the Mississauga power plant cancellation 'may cost another \$1 billion.'"

"On October 5, 2011, on the day before the provincial election, in front of the still under construction Mississauga power plant, PC leader Tim Hudak promises to stop the power plant if he wins the election, after only days before warning that he's sure it 'it may cost another \$1 billion.'"

That is the testimony of Mayor Rob Burton of Oakville, and I invite the honourable member to check out that website.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Today, we're joined in the Legislature by four horse families from Fort Erie. They're wondering why the Premier is killing racing in their community and whether it's just so that the Liberals can help out—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. If it continues, I might jump right to warnings. We will have civility here.

Finish your question, please.

1050

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —and whether it's just so the Liberals can help out the newly privatized Woodbine track pad their profit margins—the kind of track that the Tories prefer as well, Speaker. Is the Premier ready to meet with these people face to face today—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Huron—Bruce is warned.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —and explain to them why she thinks the Fort Erie track should not have a future of racing in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I welcome the folks from Fort Erie here today, and I would just say that the leader of the third party is absolutely wrong. I want there to be a future for horse racing at Fort Erie, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I want us to have a robust and sustainable horse racing industry across the province. That is not what we had in place. There was an unaccountable, untransparent system in place. It had to be changed. When I came into this office, I said that I was going to make sure that we had an integrated system with the OLG so that horse racing across this province would have a future, because I believe that it is an important part of our culture. It's an important part of the culture in rural communities around the province, and it's important to the province.

I want Fort Erie to have a future. It may not be exactly the same as its past, but I want it to have a future, and the plan we've got in place will allow for that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Liberals are gambling on the future of horse racing, and the Premier should know that the stakes are real.

Henry and Claudia Whalen are here today. They've had to meet with the bank about how they can keep their home, and the stress has caused Henry to have a heart attack. The government is pulling the rug out from under them, but still trying to roll out the red carpet for private casinos, even while community after community rejects those private casinos.

The Premier has admitted that the government's so-called modernization plan was a mistake. Will she let families like the Whalens pay for that mistake? Or will she back away from a plan that just is not working?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, as I said, I have been clear from the outset that there is a future for Fort Erie. The reality is that the track will need to work with the Ontario Racing Commission, as the other tracks will need to, Mr. Speaker, to make sure there is a plan in place.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are putting \$400 million into horse racing over the next five years, Mr.

Speaker, and each one of the tracks around the province has the opportunity to work with the Ontario Racing Commission to make the case for a business plan. That is the responsible way forward. We want a horse racing industry that is sustainable and for which the success is tied to usage by people who go to the track. We want that to be the benchmark. There was no benchmark under the slots program; there was no benchmark. There was no transparency. We need that transparency. That's—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Twelve-year-old Kayla is with us today too, Speaker. Her dad and her brother have had to move to Florida to find work.

Kayla grew up on a farm, and horses have been part of her life since she can remember. But instead of working with families like Kayla's, the Premier has taken away their livelihoods and her livelihood. Kayla asked to put this question to the Premier, and so I'm going to do it. What does the Premier think is going to happen to the horses that have been raised and trained by families like hers when there's nowhere to race those horses, and those families can't afford to keep them anymore?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm not sure where Kayla is, but I want Kayla to know that the tracks that I have visited, the horse families, the racing families that I've spoken to, the people I've spoken to in the horse racing industry are exactly the reason that I was so committed, when I came into this job, that we would put a plan in place that would allow the tracks, like Fort Erie, to work with the Ontario Racing Commission.

So I want Fort Erie to have a future. I want horse racing to have a future. It was one of my priorities. It's one of the reasons I took on the role as Minister of Agriculture and Food. I want the people in this gallery to know that there is an opportunity for Fort Erie to work with the Ontario Racing Commission and to put in place a sustainable plan for the future. That is why we wanted to bring the plan out early, so that people who are breeding horses would know that the plan was in place: \$400 million over the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. The Premier said that she killed racing at Fort Erie because the Slots at Racetracks Program wasn't affordable or transparent. She just said that earlier this morning.

Jim Thibert, the CEO of Fort Erie Race Track, is here with us today. Jim made sure that the track at Fort Erie opened their books to auditors and to the public. Will the Premier ensure that the newly private Woodbine Race-track has to open its books so Ontarians have the same level of accountability and transparency for that track?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Absolutely. I think what the leader of the third party is alluding to is the reality that, as we went into the transition, there were audits that were done of each of the tracks in the province. Those audits contained commercially sensitive information, and so they were confidential, and that was the agreement with the tracks.

There is currently an audit being done by the Auditor General of the Slots at Racetracks Program. Obviously, when that report comes out, that report will be public and will be available to all members of the Legislature and the public.

But make no mistake: We needed to make a change to the program that was unaccountable and that had been put in place by the previous government. We're making that change, but we're making it in a way that horse racing must have a sustainable future, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government did conduct an audit of racetracks to see how SARP money was being spent, and Jim Thibert and the folks from Fort Erie gladly opened up their books, but the Premier is keeping the Woodbine audit under wraps. She is not making that information public because it's commercially sensitive, Speaker? That sounds like the gas plants to me. That's why they didn't let that information come out, because it was commercially sensitive, and look where that landed Ontario.

She says she wants to be accountable and open. In fact, she's got a panel to tell her how exactly to do that. Do I need to be a member of that panel to suggest that she release the Woodbine audit?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, if you'd like to be part of that panel, you may be part of that panel.

But the reality is, as I have said, that in order to work with tracks, to go through a transition so that we could redesign a program that would be sustainable, there were audits done of each of the tracks. Those were done confidentially. That was the agreement with the tracks, and there is commercially sensitive information as part of those audits. There is currently an audit that's being done by the Auditor General, and that report will be made public. If there had been misconduct discovered in the third-party audits, then that would have been sent to the authorities. That did not happen.

Going forward, we have put a sustainable plan in place. I think it's interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that I have heard absolutely no strategy from the third party on how they would make horse racing sustainable—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Gee, Speaker, I think what the Premier is saying is, "Just trust us. Everything in those audits is tickety-boo." I don't think the people of Ontario buy that from the Liberal government.

You know, when people go to the track, they expect a fair race. Not-for-profit tracks like Fort Erie have opened up their books—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —and people are wondering if the privatized Woodbine will do the same. The government has put the livelihoods of the people here today and in rural communities across Ontario at risk. At the very least, she should be giving them the openness and the transparency that she likes to harp about but rarely delivers. When will she open the books?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said, there has been no plan coming forward from the third party on how they would make horse racing in this province sustainable.

The suggestion that underlies the leader of the third party's question is that somehow everything was fine under the previous regime, that the Slots at Racetracks Program was fine, that it was good public policy. That's just not the case, Mr. Speaker, and Fort Erie was struggling under that plan as well.

The reality is that we have worked very hard with all of the tracks in the province to put in place a plan that's going to allow them to have a future. My hope is that the people at Fort Erie will work with the Ontario Racing Commission. I want Fort Erie to have a future, not because that's the politically expedient thing to do, but because people's jobs rely on it and because horse racing is an important part of our culture. That's why we're putting the plan in place.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Health. Kimm Fletcher, a Milton mother with two young children, is asking for more time, more time with her nine-year-old son and seven-year-old daughter. After being diagnosed with stage 4 terminal glioblastoma multiforme, she has been told that she has only two months to live.

1100

Kimm's doctors have told her that Avastin will give her more time—in fact, up to 18 months more time. Minister, you and your ministry have denied funding for Avastin for uses other than for colorectal cancer, but, in fact, studies show that the use of Avastin with both colorectal cancer and brain cancer is the same: It gives patients more time.

If Ms. Fletcher lived in British Columbia, Saskatchewan or Manitoba, Avastin would be covered. Will you commit today to giving Kimm Fletcher more time, and commit to funding Avastin for her care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is a very heartbreaking story. I have followed this particular patient. I have been on the website. I have seen the pictures of Kimm Fletcher, her husband and her two gorgeous little children. I cannot help but imagine if they were my own children. It is a heartbreaking story.

We have passed a law in this Legislature that takes the politics out of drug funding. It would be against the law for me to intervene in a particular case for a particular drug.

We do have in place the Committee to Evaluate Drugs. It has twice reviewed the evidence on using

Avastin for this particular condition, and twice it has rejected it for lack of evidence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I respectfully disagree with the minister. There are several programs under which there is an ability to fund drugs for compassionate purposes, either the Exceptional Access Program or the Case-by-Case Review Program under Cancer Care Ontario. Surely, you have to agree that Kimm Fletcher's case is one of those cases where compassion should be administered.

In fact, this is why we pay taxes in the province of Ontario. Unlike some other expenditures that have been made by this government, people want their tax money to be used for their fellow Ontarians in their time of need.

Minister, Kimm Fletcher and her husband are here with us today. Will you do the right thing, extend compassion to this family, and extend Avastin for her care?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is a family going through an absolutely heartbreaking event in their life. All of us want nothing but the very, very best for this family and for this individual.

I do have the Committee to Evaluate Drugs report. These reports are publicly available on their website. As I say, it has been reviewed twice for this condition, in July 2010 and June 2011. The recommendation is that it not be funded for the treatment of this disease, on the basis that treatment has not been proven to improve survival. I will happily pass this over.

The Committee to Evaluate Drugs will always review new evidence. As a result of their work, we've added 300 new drugs to the formulary. They do hard work. These are very difficult decisions. These are not political decisions.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Some 30% to 50% of operating costs for the mining sector is the price of electricity, and the threshold for the global adjustment program still stands at one megawatt, which penalizes mid-sized producers.

In Thunder Bay, the government doesn't even realize that the electricity supply is not sufficient to support new mining developments. Will the government commit to a real plan for mining development in Ontario by coming up with a plan to increase electricity supply and to deal with the sky-high price of electricity, so that mining companies can create good jobs?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We have just received, in the last couple of days, the report from the task force for northwestern Ontario, based out of Thunder Bay. They're responding to a plan that's on the OPA website to invest billions of dollars, literally, over the foreseeable future in

northwestern Ontario for electricity and transmission. From the mining industry point of view, they will have power when they need it. We've given that commitment. We're talking to the people from northwest Ontario, in particular, on that particular issue.

In addition to that, we have introduced supports for energy prices in the north. We have the Northern Ontario Energy Credit, the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program and a number of other programs. We are going to deliver. We are delivering for northwest Ontario. That includes Thunder Bay. I'm happy to talk to the member personally—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, my question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Ontario's mining sector has created 27,500 direct jobs and tens of thousands of indirect jobs. The development of the Ring of Fire and numerous other projects in the northwest will require a skilled workforce by 2020, yet this government refuses to play a role in training programs. Mining companies can create jobs, but they need the right competitive factor, including a trained workforce.

Why is this Liberal government not investing in a training program so that the people of Ontario can benefit from the immense economic opportunity that mining can create?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm really pleased to respond to this, particularly in light of the fact that we have invested so many millions of dollars in terms of skills training and upgrading related to the great potential of the Ring of Fire. We recognize that there are many components to the development of this plan.

Clearly, our work with the First Nations—we've recognized how important that is, and it's ongoing in a positive way.

As the member points out, quite accurately, we have a mining sector in the province of Ontario that is employing more people than it ever has. We are the leading jurisdiction for exploration and for production in our mining sector in all of Canada, and one of the top 10 investment jurisdictions in the world.

Certainly, in terms of the training aspects, through a number of programs, through a number of investments, we are preparing the workforce in northwestern Ontario—in fact, in all of Ontario—to be prepared and ready for when the Ring of Fire development moves forward. We're continuing to be committed to that. That's one of the aspects that's so crucial. We certainly agree, and we're all on the same page in that regard.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation, and it deals with the importance of supporting new, thriving companies.

In my riding of York South–Weston, my constituents strive for quality and well-paying jobs so that they can provide for their families. They also want their children to have a good university or college education so that they can be ready to be the leaders of our future.

Ontario's capacity to compete in the global knowledge-based economy depends on how well we can utilize our research strengths and provide the support that our entrepreneurs and their businesses need to prosper. We need to ensure that Ontario benefits to the full extent from our knowledge-based economy because our future success and that of our children depends on it.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: How is our government helping new, upcoming companies thrive and succeed?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member from York South–Weston for that important question.

Our government recognizes the importance of assisting new companies. Actually, my ministry has helped many new start-up companies to compete in the global market. For example, we helped Client Outlook. This is a Waterloo-based software company that allows hospitals to share digital X-rays and save some money instead of spending money on setting up workstations. In Ancaster, we helped a company called Fibracast, which harnesses its technology for purifying drinking water and the treatment of waste water. Fibracast now employs 70 people in the region.

I'm proud of our government's track record in helping small, innovative companies develop products and services that are helping Ontario and also helping people's lives.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you to the minister. The backbone of any strong economy starts with providing the necessary support that small and local companies need to thrive. Small companies across our great province provide the most jobs to Ontarians, and our ability to help them turn great ideas into successful businesses and new employment opportunities is of paramount importance to our economy. When Ontarians have well-paying jobs to support their families, they can take comfort in knowing that future generations are well-positioned to prosper and succeed.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could you speak to the initiatives that our government is taking to help small, local and innovative businesses thrive?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank again the member from York South–Weston for that question.

Mr. Speaker, our government is taking strong action to ensure that Ontario companies remain globally competitive and have the necessary tools to succeed. For example, Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, is one of the very many steps that our government is taking to help small businesses. This will aim to help small businesses in Ontario, but much to their detriment, it's being delayed in this House.

I urge the opposition to stop stalling the passing of Bill 105 so that we can move forward in helping the small

businesses in this province. When innovative businesses succeed in our province, our local economies are going to succeed. We can make this happen by letting this bill proceed to the committee in order to help our small businesses across the province of Ontario.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: To the Premier: Premier, yesterday, US Steel announced that the massive blast furnaces of the former Stelco plant in Hamilton will shut down permanently by year-end. It will be the end of an era in Canadian industrial history.

At peak in the 1980s, more than 14,000 people earned a good living at Stelco. They built a proud city and helped make our economy strong.

This spring, you insisted that the jobs crisis in Ontario's manufacturing sector was a myth. Do you still believe that today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Of course, we in the government are disappointed that US Steel has made this decision, unfortunately, to end certain operations that have, in fact, been idle since 2010.

We understand that Hamilton Works's coke-making and finishing operations will continue to operate. It's important to note as well that no immediate layoffs will or have occurred. We understand that the company plans to reassign the 47 individual employees that are impacted by this regrettable decision.

Mr. Speaker, over 80% of Canada's steelmaking happens in this province. We're very proud of that. In fact, the sector employs more than 17,000 people across the province, and indirectly more than 50,000 more. But we will continue to work proactively with the entire sector to spur innovation and attract investment and create jobs.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I call on the member from Burlington, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order.

Supplementary, please?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I didn't get my answer, so, anyway, I'll continue on.

Premier, across the bay from my riding, skilled workers have been making steel for over a century. Your party has been in office for a decade. In that time, Ontario has lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs.

The manufacturing crisis is no myth, Premier; it is real. Your government has a role to play, and that role is strong leadership. Could we have changed headlines with a plan that offered more affordable industrial power rates? Would a tax deduction for investments in plant and equipment have saved jobs? We believe it would and truly wish you would take our plan.

Premier, if we have to wait until the 2014 budget to hear your jobs plan, will there be any manufacturing jobs left?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.
Be seated, please.

Minister.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I agree with the member opposite that the steel sector worldwide is facing challenges right now. In fact, the economy, as we know, in this province is facing challenges. But it's important to remember that since the bottom of the recession, we have created almost 500,000 net new jobs, many of them in the manufacturing sector, 95% of them full-time jobs and the overwhelming majority of them in the private sector as well.

When you compare it to other jurisdictions around us, the pace of job creation in this province far exceeds that in United States. In fact, it exceeds that substantially among our competitors in the Great Lake states as well.

We have a plan going forward. We're creating jobs, and that includes in the steel industry. We will work hard to make sure that those workers who are displaced have the support they need.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Steeltown got its name from the iron works and steelworks that defined Hamilton for more than a century. Yesterday, US Steel announced the permanent shutdown of their iron- and steelmaking operations.

Since 2010, US Steel has said they could restart their operations if the economy turned around. In that time, New Democrats have proposed a job-creator tax credit, getting sky-high electricity rates under control, and an industrial investment tax credit, which could have helped to add a hot strip mill—

Interjections.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Glad to see the Tories now actually accept our ideas. The problem is, the Liberals have stuck with the status quo.

New Democrats believe that Hamilton can come out of this stronger, so why is this government simply throwing up its hands?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know the leader of the third party agrees with me in saying that I'm so proud of Hamilton and the work that they've been doing over the past years to actually reach the stage where they are the number one jurisdiction in all of Canada for investment in commercial, residential and industrial activity. The work that is being done and the leadership that's being demonstrated by that city is nothing short of remarkable.

I want to mention as well that we've been working closely with Hamilton Works for a number of years, with US Steel, to support those workers who unfortunately have faced layoffs in that difficult sector of steel right now. In fact, the colleague behind me, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, since 2011 has supported an action centre with the Hamilton steelworkers to make sure that those laid-off employees are getting the support that they need. We'll continue to do that.

I'm proud of the work that Hamilton has done. I have no doubt they are going to be able to overcome—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, the minister's facile boosterism isn't enough. The government can try and pass the buck or they can stand up for Hamiltonians. Mayor Bratina talked about—and this is his words—"his worst fears come true."

The government is standing on the sidelines and watching as those fears come true. They can waste a billion dollars on cancelling gas plants to save a few Liberal seats in the GTA, but they won't fund a manufacturing investment tax credit that could help businesses across Ontario invest and grow.

Hamilton is filled with smart, dedicated, hard-working people who can come out of this stronger. Is the Premier going to stop standing by and watching as Steeltown loses its steelmaking works, or will she start listening to New Democrats and focus on job creation instead of her own political self-interest?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: You know, we are investing in Hamilton. We are supporting the leadership in Hamilton as they work their way through transitions, including the likes of what we're hearing in the steelworks. But I want to say that we are investing in manufacturing right across this province. In fact, we've committed nearly a billion dollars to support 170 projects in the province's manufacturing sector since 2007.

We've been providing tax relief, as well, to our manufacturers. Of course, we paralleled the federal government in the budget earlier this year to extend the accelerated capital cost allowance. That is a value of nearly a quarter of a billion dollars over the next several years. Of course, through the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund and other mechanisms, we're investing in the manufacturing and other sectors throughout that region of Ontario. We're proud to work with the local leadership to do that.

NORTHERN ONTARIO HERITAGE FUND

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and has to do with the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund. Minister, one of the chronic, constant complaints we hear, as northerners, from our political opponents is that northern Ontario doesn't have a voice and that their voice is not heard. Obviously, as a northerner, I emphatically reject that premise.

Our investments through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund and our increases in funding—it's important to note that taking that fund from \$60 million to \$100 million annually is just one very clear indication that in fact the north is being heard and that northern members continue to deliver for their ridings.

I know that very recently, Minister, you made an announcement on a bit of a renew, relook and refresh of the programming within the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund. I'm wondering, Minister, if you could share with

the House exactly what this programming is going to do to continue that wonderful trend in northern Ontario.

1120

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you so much to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. We're so very proud of the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. in terms of the jobs that it has created: 22,000 jobs created or retained over the last 10 years, and thousands abroad; \$890 million in investment.

Two weeks ago, we decided we needed to look and say, "Can we make the program even stronger?" We had the opportunity to announce five new programs to basically enhance how the heritage fund works. What we recognize is that we want to tie it into the priorities that were identified in the northern Ontario growth plan—existing and emerging sectors in the economy, the ones that are the real priorities for the north.

What we've done is, with the new programs, the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. has aligned programs with those sectors that will maximize benefits for northerners and even work better than it has in the past. We've been working with northern municipalities, aboriginal communities, certainly industries and the private sector to get a stronger, more diverse and sustainable northern economy. I'll look forward in my supplementary to perhaps providing—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I'm going to ask the minister: Next time, wait for me to acknowledge you before you start; your microphone won't be on.

Carry on. Supplementary.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Minister, thank you for that response. As mentioned, since October 2003—over \$860 million towards more than 5,800 projects, leveraging over \$3 billion in investment. I can tell you that in my riding alone, there has been tens of millions of dollars of investment through hundreds of projects, creating or maintaining close to 1,700 jobs.

Here are a few examples in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. Nu-Tech Metals: \$300,000 to expand a fabrication shop for a high-definition plasma table, allowing them to bid on jobs they previously couldn't and to hire more people. Rubin Business Park in Murillo and Olive Paipoonge: over \$500,000 for an expansion of their industrial park with serviced lots. Thunder Bay International Airport Authority, the third-busiest airport in all of Ontario: \$1 million to continue the great trend that we see there on the business expansion of Thunder Bay International Airport.

Minister, can you please share with the House the new programming—specifically how we're going to see that continue what has been a great trend through NOHFC all across northern Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you so much again. This is why aligning the programs with the growth plan is so important, because the growth plan calls on us to strengthen the north's competitive advantage. Our program changes are focusing investment on existing and emerging sectors that have strong potential for significant growth across the north.

As part of our government's plan to strengthen the economy and support a dynamic and innovative business climate that attracts investment and helps create jobs, the NOHFC wants to continue to partner with northerners. The five new programs at the heritage fund are building the themes of private sector job creation, supporting northern community infrastructure, enhancing economic development capacity, stimulating commercialization, innovation and productivity, and, of course, attracting and retaining talent.

We look forward to continuing to work with all of our northern organizations to keep building jobs, creating jobs, in northern Ontario.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Premier. As you're aware, Premier, your government has managed to pass just four pieces of legislation since your Liberal coronation. Of course, my Bill 74, on which you flipped and flopped by first supporting and then opposing and then just outright hiding, was defeated yesterday. Premier, you demonstrated cowardly, weak leadership.

This morning, though—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not going to accept that. It's not what I would call elevating the debate, so the member will withdraw.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I withdraw.

Premier, you demonstrated weak leadership.

This morning, I'd like to ask you about Bill 69, the Prompt Payment Act. Bill 69 is an important bill that has broad support from all three parties in this House. The Prompt Payment Act is also supported by industry stakeholders such as the Council of Ontario Construction Associations and the Ontario Road Builders' Association.

Premier, is Bill 69 a priority for your Liberal government? And if so, when do you expect to move forward on this important piece of legislation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to thank the member for Vaughan for his efforts in this area. I realize there's interest in this piece of legislation on both sides of the House. The bill will move through the normal course of the process in the Legislature. There will be an opportunity for debate and a vote.

I'm focused on making sure that we make the investments in people and in infrastructure and in a business climate that's going to bring business to this province and is going to work with the private sector to create jobs. This piece of legislation will have its day in the House, and I look forward to the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Premier, enough with the song and dance. You're delaying this legislation.

The construction industry employs over 400,000 men and women, approximately 6.5% of Ontario's total workforce. Prompt payment legislation will correct the existing inequity, so that small and medium-sized construction firms have the ability to invest, grow and create jobs.

Premier, prompt payment legislation already exists around the world, in the majority of US states, the UK, the EU, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand. One month ago I questioned you about this important piece of legislation, and last week I wrote to your office, urging you to move forward with Bill 69.

Premier, it's obvious that you have no desire to move forward on prompt payment legislation. Have you told your MPP from Vaughan that his Bill 69 isn't going anywhere in your Liberal government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The member is being a little mischievous. He understands more than anyone that this is a private member's bill. It is right now before committee, and there will be an opportunity for discussion at committee. He knows that for private members' bills there is a tradition that their movement to third reading, when it does happen, happens after a discussion between the parties. As a result of agreements, his particular one came forward due to a programming motion that was put forward. There are others that have come from a consensus between the House leaders. He knows that that's the process to follow.

But if he wants to talk about support for small businesses, maybe he wants to stand up and explain why the Conservative Party is filibustering Bill 105, which would cut taxes for small business, and not allowing it to proceed to committee so that it can have the positive economic effects we know that it will bring.

CATARACT SURGERY

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, yesterday Londoners learned that your ministry is cutting cataract surgeries to save money. In London, the wait time for cataract surgery is nearly 200 days and rising, which, as we know, affects seniors the most.

This government didn't listen to the Eye Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario when they said that these cuts will "have dire consequences for patients requiring cataract surgery." Why is this Liberal government cutting back cataract surgeries for seniors who need it to be able to see?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When it comes to cataract surgery, this government has a remarkable record. Across the province, wait times for cataract surgeries have been cut in half. As of August 2013, 93% of cataract surgeries were being completed within our targets.

Province-wide—and I'll need my glasses for this—we've cut 163 days off cataract surgery. We've more than cut in half the wait times. The member opposite might remember this: At St. Joseph's Health Care, when we started measuring cataract surgeries, it was 495 days—a year and a half. We have reduced that by 60%, and we are almost at the target.

We have a great success story. I would love to talk about it more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I appreciate the minister's response. However, Shirley Hazelwood is 77 years old and lives in my riding of London West. She is on a wait-list and won't have cataract surgery until September 2014. That's a wait time of almost one year, more than double the target this government promised. Shirley can no longer read or watch TV, and is now considering going to the US to have surgery.

Shirley and seniors in this province need cataract surgery to be able to see. They shouldn't have to leave the country to get their vision corrected.

Is this Liberal government trying to make up the \$1.1 billion wasted on the gas plants scandal by forcing seniors with cataracts to wait longer as their eyesight deteriorates?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's important to acknowledge that ours was the government that started to measure wait times. We are the government that publicly reports wait times. We are the government that's making strategic investments to bring down wait times and to hold them below target as we address the backlog.

We have a great success story. The volumes are allocated according to the wait times. We manage by wait times. I understand that different physicians would have different wait times. But in the southwest, the wait time for cataract surgery is 171 days, so certainly this particular person could go to a different physician and get a lower wait time, Speaker.

1130

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. My constituents in Ajax-Pickering tell me that every day, as the roads become more congested, they are turning to public transit. As a government—I'm just going to have to talk a little louder so my friends can hear—we are making record investments in public transit to make sure it's more reliable. I'm pleased that public transit has been a priority for this government.

There is a distinct need to reduce gridlock and continue to improve air quality and to build stronger communities. GO Transit is a large part of this strategy. Unfortunately, I was troubled to hear recently that the Leader of the Opposition proposed to cancel these planned transit investments, specifically some of the BRT—that's the bus rapid transit projects—in the Big Move. As a member with a BRT project currently under way, I was hoping that the minister could provide a current status of the Durham Pulse project—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Minister of Transportation?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member for Ajax-Pickering, who has been a particular champion for a very important project, which is the Durham Pulse project, Mr. Speaker, which is going to take students all across Durham region to U of T Scarborough. We're working with Roger Anderson and the folks to extend it to Centennial College.

On this side of the House, we actually think the 905 wants and understands transit, likes transit and LRTs, and that students at Centennial College and U of T Scarborough actually want affordable transit and that those families shouldn't have to have three beater cars in their driveways for their kids.

Mr. Speaker, we have a problem right now, though. The official opposition is proposing to cancel most of the 15 LRT and BRT projects. That would be catastrophic for Bombardier. It would mean a massive loss of jobs in Thunder Bay and Barrie, where these plants are. It would mean—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you to my minister for the update on the Durham Pulse. It's good that we're working so closely with municipalities across Ontario to deliver this service. I know that the people in my riding of Ajax-Pickering will be pleased to hear that our unprecedented transit investments are working to reduce congestion in our communities.

An important part of our transit strategy is also to invest in highways. It's important that we are committed to building all transportation infrastructure that is necessary and suitable to the needs of our constituents. That includes investments in roads and highways. Could the minister please update the House on our investments in the highway infrastructure in my riding?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'd be very happy to. I want to again thank the really remarkable member for Ajax-Pickering, whom I refer to as Father Joe, my spiritual leader, and the Minister of Consumer Affairs, because they have delivered big-time for the folks that way: \$567.13 million for transit—the biggest investment in transit in the history of Durham region. We're proud of that record. In addition, there's \$329 million for highways, including over \$100 million for Highway 7 and Highway 401; half-hour all-day GO service, which is allowing the mayors along those corridors to actually see new commercial clusters and unprecedented growth in jobs along the GO corridor because they're accessible now to downtown Toronto; plus the important extension of the 407.

This government is acting on mobility. The opposition wants to cancel it all, Mr. Speaker.

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, Ontarians know it was time to put the OSPCA on a shorter leash by legislating the oversight and accountability that's non-existent today. Instead, you let them right off the leash with a \$5.5-million windfall. OSPCA board chair Rob Godfrey told the Toronto Star that he can't even get basic details about investigations made public. He tried, but the board shot him down.

We know that the board chair himself is powerless to provide even the tiniest bit of transparency. Doesn't that prove I'm right: that it doesn't matter if you stick a ministry staffer at the end of the board table; it does nothing to give the accountability that the OSPCA needs?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm very proud of the work that the OSPCA is doing, and the community at large is very proud also, because they receive a lot of donations from the community. With this announcement last Friday, we have this \$5.5 million that we have provided to the OSPCA that will improve the care of animals in Ontario, because it will establish a 24/7 centralized dispatch service to ensure that an enforcement officer can respond effectively. They will be creating a squad of specialized, trained investigators who will crack down on puppy mills and kitten mills. They will be delivering specialized livestock training for investigators in the agriculture sector.

In the supplementary, I will—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the minister: I'm shocked that you can't see the problem here. You barely finished your announcement and the OSPCA had already started bragging about flexing its new muscles.

You claim the new zoo registry is voluntary, yet the OSPCA says that anyone that doesn't sign up can expect a surprise knock at the door. I'd ask if using a voluntary registry to target people is right, but even if you didn't like it, you can't do anything about it.

Again, Minister, can you explain to Ontarians why you expanded the powers of this private police agency without putting anything in legislation that gives you any say whatsoever on how they wield their power?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, with this announcement came more accountability for the OSPCA. They have an agreement now with the ministry that stipulates that the OSPCA will produce two full reports per year for the government. We will have someone from the ministry sitting on the board of directors, and they will ensure that the government receives progress reports from the OSPCA.

But you know what, Mr. Speaker? I'm not going to take advice from that party who recently moved a motion to strip the OSPCA of the power to oversee animal welfare on the farm. They want no OSPCA to look after and to oversee what is being done on the farm. We voted against that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

DEFERRED VOTES

WIRELESS SERVICES
AGREEMENTS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES CONVENTIONS
DE SERVICES SANS FIL

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 60, An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device / Projet de loi 60, Loi visant à mieux protéger les consommateurs en ce qui concerne les conventions de consommation portant sur les services sans fil accessibles au moyen d'un téléphone cellulaire, d'un téléphone intelligent ou de tout autre appareil mobile semblable.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1138 to 1143.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On October 29, Ms. MacCharles moved third reading of Bill 60.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Paul
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harris, Michael	Milligan, Rob E.
Arnott, Ted	Hatfield, Percy	Milloy, John
Bailey, Robert	Hillier, Randy	Moridi, Reza
Balkissoon, Bas	Holiday, Douglas C.	Munro, Julia
Barrett, Toby	Howarth, Andrea	Murray, Glen R.
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoskins, Eric	Naqvi, Yasir
Bisson, Gilles	Hudak, Tim	Natyshak, Taras
Bradley, James J.	Hunter, Mitzie	Nicholls, Rick
Campbell, Sarah	Jackson, Rod	O'Toole, John
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jaczek, Helena	Oraziotti, David
Chiarelli, Bob	Jeffrey, Linda	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Chudleigh, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Piruzza, Teresa
Clark, Steve	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Coteau, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Sattler, Peggy
Crack, Grant	Leone, Rob	Schein, Jonah
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Scott, Laurie
Del Duca, Steven	MacLaren, Jack	Sergio, Mario
Delaney, Bob	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Dhillon, Vic	Mangat, Amrit	Singh, Jagmeet
Dickson, Joe	Mantha, Michael	Smith, Todd
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Duguid, Brad	Matthews, Deborah	Taylor, Monique
Elliott, Christine	Mauro, Bill	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	McDonell, Jim	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	McKenna, Jane	Wilson, Jim
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMeekin, Ted	Wong, Soo
Forster, Cindy	McNaughton, Monte	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fraser, John	McNeely, Phil	Yakubski, John
Gerretsen, John	Meilleur, Madeleine	Yurek, Jeff
Gravelle, Michael	Miller, Norm	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 96; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from York-Simcoe on a point of order.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome the students of Holy Trinity from Bradford, Ontario.

They were here until the count for the vote—but I'd like all members to welcome the students of Holy Trinity.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to welcome the uncle of page Evan Tanovich, who we'll be treating to lunch today. His uncle Chris Paul has joined us this morning as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1147 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to introduce guests that will soon be here, two professors from the University of Guelph G360 project: Dr. Jana Levison and Dr. John Cherry, who are joining us today to give a presentation in the media studio.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to introduce friends and family of Will Ferguson: Gail Bebenek, Gary Ferguson, Wanda Hoffman, Wendy Ignor, Corrie Ferguson, Kyle Patteson, Henry Ignor, Jody Lindner, Dylan Eckhardt, Ethan Eckhardt, Noah Lindner, Zack Lindner, Mike Ramsay, Cindy Dellow, Peter Di Franco, Greg Hamara and Chris Mockler. Welcome to the House.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm pleased to announce today that we have Mr. Bill Laidlaw with us in the west members' gallery. He is the executive director of the Ontario Association of Food Banks.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AWARD RECIPIENTS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Founded 50 years ago by His Royal Highness Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award encourages personal development and community involvement in young people. These awards challenge young people from age 14 to 25 in four areas—community services, skill development, physical fitness and adventurous journey—that help ensure our youth grow up active, healthy and involved.

More than half a million young Canadians have taken the challenge since 1963, and among the award's recipients this year were two of my constituents: Alana Lisik and Whitney Way. Alana has focused her energies on working to address global poverty and social injustice. Whitney is working to explore and protect our precious natural environment. Both are proof positive that the next generation is ready to meet the challenges of the future with passion and purpose.

I would also like to celebrate the good work of another of my constituents, Frances Wentges, who was recently named one of Ontario's Senior Achievement Award recipients for 2013. An active volunteer for Burlington's

Good Shepherd Centre, Frances contributed to the successful establishment of Good Shepherd Square, which helps vulnerable members of my community develop resilience in the face of abuse and poverty.

I congratulate all three women on their achievements.

JOHN WHITE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I rise to pay tribute to a true Canadian hero that my community lost in July of this year. John White was a member of the Essex and Kent Scottish Regiment. John served in World War II with the Royal Canadian Artillery. He worked as a security guard for Seagram distilleries, where he was instrumental in securing a union.

Over the years, John enjoyed boxing and was also a talented horseman and original member of the Southern Ontario Horseman's Society, where he won many championships competing in the barrel racing events with his famed horse, Shadow.

A lover of laughter and literature, John is famous for reciting by heart the humorous and foreboding tales of *The Shooting of Dan McGrew* and *The Cremation of Sam McGee* with the same dramatic intensity that Robert W. Service would have yarned them with himself. To hear John recite, you'll know of that deep, resonating voice that reaches inside of you, grabs you and holds you tightly. Never have the words of *High Flight* or *In Flanders Fields* been so bold and full of life as they were when spoken by the very man who epitomized their cause.

John wrote his first poem as a young soldier serving in the Second World War in Holland, which he fondly titled *Pleasant Memories*. It would be nearly 50 years later before he would bring pen to paper again to compose over a hundred poems.

Receiving the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal, and writing and publishing at 90 years young, John leaves his mark on the world as an inspiration to embrace life, the people you love, and to make the most out of every day you've been gifted.

Prior to John's passing on July 8, 2013, it was his expressed wish that his book be a lasting legacy that he wanted to share with the world. Per his wishes, the proceeds from his book will be donated to the other family that he had at Legion Branch 157 and St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church.

John was a gift to our nation and to the community of Amherstburg. I want to thank his family for sharing him with us for so long.

Lest we forget.

FRIENDS OF THE GUILD PARK AND GARDENS

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I'd like to stand today to recognize an organization in my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood—the most recent winner of the Heritage Toronto Award in the Community Heritage category—the Friends of the Guild Park and Gardens, led by

president John Mason. This organization was established in 2012 and formally founded in the summer of 2013. They are dedicated to preserving one of the longest-standing historical sites in Scarborough, the Guild Park. The Friends of the Guild Park strive to improve, enhance and protect the Guild Park, a 22-acre park and historical site located in Scarborough-Guildwood.

I've had the pleasure of speaking to the members of the Friends of the Guild Park on several occasions, and their passion and commitment are part of what makes my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood such a wonderful place to live and work.

The people of my riding are lucky to have the Friends of the Guild Park and Gardens working to preserve this site for future generations of Torontonians and Ontarians. I'm honoured to recognize them today as one of the winners of the Heritage Toronto Awards, an award that is given to people of this city who are here to preserve the great history of our city.

GREY BRUCE AGRICULTURE AND CULINARY ASSOCIATION

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: This past weekend, I had the pleasure of attending the Field to Fork gala held by the Grey Bruce Agriculture and Culinary Association. This association is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting and increasing public awareness of fresh, local food in the community. They promote local food through education, marketing and networking. Their members include farmers, restaurant owners, food processors, food distributors, farmers' markets and cooking schools.

The Grey Bruce Agriculture and Culinary Association works collaboratively with the Grey and Bruce counties and others to help these counties develop as a culinary destination. Well, let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, they have succeeded at this. Grey and Bruce counties have some of the best farms and farmers' markets in the province—and restaurants, I should add. I encourage everyone to go and visit the area, if you have not already.

The purpose of the Field to Fork gala is to raise public awareness about what is available locally, and a friendly little competition between several local chefs, who cook up a storm, never hurts as well.

I would like to congratulate two local individuals who were given awards for promoting local food through education, marketing and networking within their facilities. Their names are Nicole Wise—she operates *Harley's in Mildmay*—and Hugh Simpson, who has a wonderful restaurant near *Eugenia*.

I would also like to thank all the restaurants who donated to the gala. They made the night amazing. And to the culinary and agricultural association, thank you for inviting me. I commend everyone involved. Let's support local food.

ALL TRIBES CHRISTIAN CAMP

Mr. Michael Mantha: I would like to take the opportunity to highlight an organization in my riding called the

All Tribes Christian Camp, which was formerly known as Crystal Springs Farms. This property was taken over by Millie Jacobs in 1963 and has become a retreat place for people to come, build, guide and renew their spirits.

The once-thriving orchards were left abandoned and overgrown with weeds, and the barns were left falling apart. News of this beautiful campground has been spreading, and people have united together to rejuvenate the land.

The camp's name reflects the owner's deep commitment to eradicating racial discrimination, as well as honouring her own Cherokee heritage. "All Tribes" refers to the biblical 12 tribes and reflects the camp's interdenominational orientation. The camp is open to groups from all faiths and churches.

As this camp grew larger and demand increased, so did the facility. In 1987, they began building the camp's centrepiece, the Edna Lee Lodge, named after the owner's good friend. The camp is furnished with beautiful furniture made by local Mennonite families. The building and improvements continue. All Tribes Christian Camp is now a well-recognized multi-purpose recreational centre.

I want to congratulate All Tribes, who celebrated their 50th anniversary this summer. Many came out and shared the memories with this beautiful place in Algoma-Manitoulin, and it was truly an honour to share that special day with them.

1510

SENIORS' IDENTITY CARD

Mr. Bob Delaney: This is a message for seniors and their families about the identity cards that seniors carry. If your parent or grandparent lives in a managed-care home or a seniors' residence apart from the family, it's important to review what form of identification your senior is carrying.

It's unfortunately too common to find a senior with an expired driver's licence or a licence that shows a residence at which the individual has not lived for years. Such a primary piece of identification is worse than useless. It gives the bearer a false sense of security that he or she has a valid form of identification, when at the very moment that ID is needed to vote, to board an aircraft, to open a bank account, the person will find that the out-of-date or incorrectly addressed ID is not accepted.

Seniors who no longer drive should consider getting the Ontario photo ID card. It is as good as your driver's licence for government-issued identification. Whether for non-drivers or for seniors, this is the card to carry in your wallet. The Ontario photo ID card is available at ServiceOntario centres.

I would ask people to review what your parents and grandparents are carrying as ID and ensure that each senior has one government-issued, valid piece of identification.

FOOD BANKS

Mr. Robert Bailey: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my gratitude to the members of the Standing Committee on Social Policy, who last night adopted the PC amendment to the Local Food Act, based on my private member's bill, Bill 68, Fighting Hunger with Local Food Act, 2013.

The amendment will create a tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural products to Ontario food banks and community food programs. The adoption of this amendment is a great day for food banks, food programs and especially those they serve.

There are many Ontario families that simply cannot afford to put food on the table. They rely on these food banks to help them. Over 413,000 Ontarians, including 160,000 children, used food banks every month in 2012, an all-time high for this province. The increased demand has placed a lot of pressure on food banks and community food programs to increase their food supply, especially the supply of fresh, nutrient-dense foods like fruits and vegetables grown right here in Ontario.

We are joined today in the Legislature by Mr. Bill Laidlaw, executive director of the Ontario Association of Food Banks. On behalf of Mr. Laidlaw, the food banks and meal programs across Ontario and the people who must access them, I strongly encourage the government to immediately call the amended Local Food Act back to the House for a third and final vote.

Let's begin to fight hunger with local food.

PARC ROYAL 22^e RÉGIMENT

M. Phil McNeely: Nous sommes à Orléans le berceau d'une des plus grandes communautés francophones à l'extérieur de la province du Québec. La région d'Orléans s'est aussi avérée, au fil des années, un endroit de choix de plusieurs militaires pour s'y installer avec leur famille.

C'est pourquoi lorsque le major à la retraite Jean-Claude Allard, président de l'Association du Royal 22^e Régiment, succursale Ottawa-Gatineau, ainsi que le major à la retraite Élisabeth Allard, tous deux résidents d'Orléans, m'ont fait part de leur démarche pour la dénomination du Parc des Aînés de Cumberland au nom du Royal 22^e Régiment à l'occasion de son 100^e anniversaire, je ne pouvais que saluer leur initiative et leur donner un appui inconditionnel.

Je suis donc très fier d'annoncer que le Parc des Aînés de Cumberland, situé sur le boulevard Centrum à Orléans, a été officiellement désigné, lors d'une cérémonie tenue le jeudi 24 octobre, le Parc Royal 22^e Régiment.

Je me dois de mentionner la présence à l'événement de deux vétérans de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, le colonel Ernest Adolphe Côté, âgé de 100 ans, et l'adjudant Roland Lalonde, âgé de 90 ans.

Grâce à la ténacité d'individus comme Élisabeth Allard et Jean-Claude Allard et à l'appui de plusieurs

ainés, nous avons maintenant un endroit reconnaissant la contribution des militaires canadiens français à la communauté d'Orléans.

TRANSFORMER STATION

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I stand today to inform members of a news conference that was hosted today and sponsored by our critic on the environment, Michael Harris, and myself, to support the Enniskillen Environmental Association, bringing forward information about a mega transformer project in my riding. This is a Hydro One transformer project, and it's on top of the Oak Ridges moraine.

At the news conference, members of the association introduced an independent study by a team of three distinguished scientists who reviewed the Clarington transformer station Class Environmental Assessment Draft Environmental Study.

Dr. Jana Levinson and Dr. John Cherry, who were in attendance and gave remarks, and Dr. Beth Parker—all from the University of Guelph 360 project—concluded in part that insufficient site-specific hydrological study characterization has been conducted to ensure safeguarding of the groundwater in the area. Mr. Speaker, this is in line with what local residents such as Clint Cole, Stan Kuzma, Jim Sullivan, Doug Taylor and Pedro Pelletier have been saying for some years.

This House knows, from the Oakville and Mississauga gas plant experience, what happens when major projects are approved without input from the public. Haste makes waste—\$1 billion, in that case.

I urge the members to support my private member's resolution requiring a moratorium on projects like the Clarington transformer station, and I support a moratorium until there have been complete reviews of the Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan. I urge all members to support me.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

WILL FERGUSON

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to Mr. Will Ferguson, former member of this Legislature from the riding of Kitchener, who served from 1990 to 1994, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader has requested unanimous consent to pay tribute to Will Ferguson. Do we agree? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: It's a real honour for me to pay tribute, on behalf of the Liberal Party, on behalf of the government caucus, to one of my predecessors here in the Legislature as a member from Kitchener, Mr. Will Ferguson. I'd like to express my welcome to his family

and friends who are gathered here today, who have come to hear the tribute that's being offered.

Will, as members are aware, and as has been stated, served in this Legislature from 1990 to 1994. Even though I only met him on several occasions, I was certainly always aware of him as a political force in our community. Will came to Queen's Park as part of the Bob Rae sweep and rose through the ranks, initially serving as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. In the summer of 1991, he was elevated to cabinet and became Ontario's Minister of Energy, a post he held until early 1992. He later served as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Will was a fighter who loved politics. He made his first bid for Kitchener city council in 1972 while an 18-year-old high school student at Cameron Heights Collegiate. Although unsuccessful in this early attempt, he eventually won election in 1979 at age 24, making him the youngest city councillor in Kitchener's history. Will's municipal career spanned almost 12 years, and there are numerous stories about him. All of them centred on his passion and his drive to help the little guy, the underdog and the marginalized.

Among his causes was the work of the late Anna Kaljas in our community. Anna, a legend in Waterloo region, ran a home for what we would call the hard-to-house today, those who, due to mental health and addiction problems, were unwelcome even in our community's homeless shelters and hostels. Will stepped in and helped get Anna financial assistance from the region to continue her operations.

Will was tenacious. A tribute in our local paper at the time of his passing quoted Wayne Samuelson, retired president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, who served as a Kitchener city councillor with Will. Samuelson told the story of Ferguson trying to get action from city hall about gravel being laid down on the streets in his ward. He asked the city to spray the streets down with water so that the dust from the gravel wouldn't blow into people's homes. His requests were ignored, so one day Will brought a big sack of the same gravel into the council chamber and dumped it out onto the table. Dust flew everywhere, and action was taken.

No biography of Will Ferguson can ignore the troubles, challenges and, indeed, tragedies that he faced both politically and personally. Allegations about an incident that had happened years earlier forced his resignation from cabinet and from the New Democratic caucus. Although he was later acquitted and reinstated to the caucus, friends and observers note that it seriously affected Will and tempered some of the incredible drive that he brought to every role.

Will's later life was not easy. He died far too young at age 57, and like each and every one of us, he had his own share of demons. But he also had much to be proud of.

1520

I had the opportunity to attend a memorial mass in his honour following his death, and in the course of a few

hours it became clear the legacy that Will left to our community.

Despite the fact that it was a beautiful summer evening, the church was packed, and although the usual collection of politicians and dignitaries was there, for the most part it was full of ordinary people; in many cases, individuals you knew had not been dealt the best hand in life.

People had seen in Will a champion, someone who cared about them, who fought for them, who was determined to make a difference in their lives.

I think members will agree that one of the greatest compliments you can give a politician is to recognize that they got into politics for all the right reasons, or, in more direct terms, to note that what drives him or her is the simple desire to offer a helping hand to those who are trying to deal with the system that's not always designed to help those who are not well connected or wealthy.

As I looked around the church that night and heard the many Will Ferguson stories during the reception that followed, I realized that Will Ferguson had gone into politics for all the right reasons.

Mr. Speaker, our province has lost a fighter, an advocate and someone who wasn't afraid to stand up for ordinary people.

On behalf of the Liberal caucus, I express our deepest condolences and sympathies to the Ferguson family and pay tribute to an outstanding member of this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tributes?

Mr. Michael Harris: I, too, rise in the Ontario Legislature today to pay tribute to a hard-working Kitchener politician who was always known for looking out for the little guy.

My colleague from Kitchener Centre just presented his five minutes on behalf of his party. My colleague to the left, Catherine Fife from Kitchener-Waterloo, will have her opportunity. You'll likely hear some of the similar stories that the member from Kitchener Centre expressed, and I, too, will as well, but I know that after speaking to the family, some of those stories can be told time and time again, and I'm sure it'll bring smiles to the faces of family and friends when they hear the stories of Will Ferguson, a member of this Ontario Legislature from 1990-94. In fact, he was born February 13, 1954, and lived a life dedicated to helping those around him.

Although we may not have shared the same political stripes, I want to take this time to honour his commitment to the people of Kitchener and those of all of Ontario.

I know he tried his first time in elected office at the young age of 18, while a high school student. However, that first time didn't prevent him—it was unfortunate that he didn't take a seat then. He did get elected at the age of 24 and, in fact, became the youngest city of Kitchener alderman in our city's history.

Mr. Ferguson was known for spending long days at the office and around the riding, ensuring that his constituents' concerns were being addressed. No matter who called or who wrote him, he did all he could to help, even if it meant taking risks. His constituents remember him as being an MPP who wasn't afraid to pick up the

phone personally and take the time to help them find a solution to their problems.

From his work in Kitchener and Toronto, and from places as far away as Nunavut and South Africa, Mr. Ferguson fought for what he truly believed in.

As a member of the New Democratic Party, he represented the riding of Kitchener from September 6, 1990, to October 8, 1994. During that time, he served in many important roles, including Minister of Energy, parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

As Minister of Energy, Mr. Ferguson maintained the philosophy that the cheapest, most environmental kilowatt of energy spent is the one not used. He took it upon himself to help Ontarians conserve energy in their homes by handing out energy-saving light bulbs to replace the old light bulbs in most of our homes. He believed that if each of us took it upon ourselves to save energy in our own homes and businesses, we could save plenty of tax money on energy infrastructure.

Prior to being elected to come to Queen's Park, he also represented the Rockway-St. Mary's ward in Kitchener and served as a regional councillor for 12 years. Mr. Ferguson was known there for stirring the pot, always putting his constituents ahead of politics.

As we heard an example previously, Mr. Ferguson, as a councillor, had received several complaints about gravel being laid down on the streets of his ward. People were complaining that the dust was getting into their homes and making a mess of their neighbourhood. At the time, the city wouldn't agree with the request to spray the streets down with water to reduce the dust from blowing all over the place. So, to fix the situation, he marched into the council chamber with a large pail of gravel and dumped it everywhere. As soon as the dust settled, council, of course, changed their minds.

This is just one example of the creative ideas Mr. Ferguson used to catch people's attention and resolve a lot of contentious issues. Many residents in Waterloo region admired this quality, which is why he served in politics as long as he did.

Coming from a large single-parent family, Will Ferguson knew how important it was to preserve the family budget. While he was still a city councillor, he took it upon himself to reduce the size and cost of city hall so that residents' taxes could be lowered. Among all of his colleagues and staff against his protests, he fought on to advance his constituents' interests.

Speaking of his family, of course, I know many of them are here today, and I'd like to recognize his family for being here: Mr. Ferguson's daughter, Corrie Ferguson, and her fiancé, Kyle Patteson; Mr. Ferguson's triplet siblings—yes, that's triplet siblings—Wanda Hoffman and Wendy Ignor, who is here with her husband, Henry; his twin siblings, Gail Bebenek and, of course, his brother, Gary. I know that I read—and I spoke with Gary, who just waved there, and he said that at times they liked to compare themselves to the Kennedys,

as a family of politicians, but the Kennedys had a lot more money. Of course, I recognize the many nieces and nephews here today.

Speaker, I'd like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak about a celebrated local politician, Will Ferguson, in our community of Kitchener-Waterloo. On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, our deepest condolences.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to speak today about the life and public service of the Honourable William "Willie" Ferguson, MPP for the riding of Kitchener from 1990 to 1994.

Many of his family and friends are with us today. Their presence speaks to the impact Will had on those who knew him, and I want to thank them for sharing him with us, with the people of Kitchener and with the province of Ontario.

From those I have asked and from what I've read about him, Will had a deep connection to his community, built during the time he spent serving his fellow citizens. Will was known as a scrapper, as a fighter, as someone who saw a problem and thought only of how to solve it, no matter what. He never backed down from a challenge, and he was never afraid of anyone or anything.

This seems the right time to mention that Will was a staunch New Democrat. His sister Wanda, who is here, asked me to mention that, because Will would have wanted it on the record.

Although he wasn't a large man, pound for pound, Will was as tough as they come. In fact, he was an amateur boxer. He earned a silver medal as a middleweight at the 1970 Ontario Winter Games. His mother, Mary, said she was happy when he chose politics over boxing. "I was kind of afraid he might end up being a professional boxer," she said. "Politics is much safer." I'm not so sure about that.

Will never played it safe. He decided to get into politics very early and didn't pull a punch during his career in public life. He first ran for Kitchener city council in 1972, when he was 18. He didn't win the election, but he won plenty of admirers for doing so. By 1979, with a little more experience, he became Kitchener's youngest alderman, at 24 years of age.

From 1979 until 1990, Will represented Rockway-St. Mary's and earned a reputation as a hard worker, someone who never gave up and who made sure the needs of his constituents were being met.

While serving on council, he was sometimes oppositional—we've heard the story of the dust; it's legendary—because it takes a lot of backbone to bring your constituents' needs right to the council chambers.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Physically.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Physically, yes.

Will had an ideal vision of leadership that he strived for, shaped by his experiences and the hardship of his youth. His mother, Mary, raised five young kids on her own. As he said in 1991, "At that age, I recognized some of the real injustices we faced. The reason we were in the position we were in was obviously not our fault." Will

lived by that ethic as he spent his political career trying to help those who needed it.

1530

As a councillor in the 1980s, he took on the challenge of finding municipal funding for Anna Kaljas, the Kitchener humanitarian who, in her boarding houses, helped people with mental health challenges who could not stay in homeless shelters or ordinary group homes. Will understood the importance of the issue and he helped Anna get a grant for her three boarding houses. This was an act of true compassion. Will was ever vigilant to respond to calls for assistance from the people he took an oath to serve. This translated into his work here in the Legislature.

I believe Will Ferguson's political career tells us an important story about building from strong constituency work at the local level. It is a great opportunity to learn about our system of democracy and to be reminded of who you work for. When politicians are connected directly to their community, they can foster feelings of understanding and loyalty from their constituents. Will Ferguson was connected, and he experienced that better than most, as the local newspaper printed many supportive comments from people in Kitchener after he resigned as Minister of Energy.

Will served in interesting times at Queen's Park, winning his seat in 1990 and entering cabinet in 1991. While I did not know Will Ferguson myself, I can tell you that the transition to this place, to Queen's Park, is not without its challenges for every person who decides to do so.

As I prepared to deliver this tribute today, I spent some time looking at his file in the legislative library, flipping through stories from the early 1990s. It gave me an opportunity to think about what it means to be an elected representative, to become a politician. It takes strength and it takes the courage of your convictions to decide to run, and it takes a great deal more of both if you're lucky enough to win an election. So often we lose sight of the person behind the politician; we shouldn't forget that. For all the scrutiny we receive and all the ink that's spilled about what we say and do, we are all just like anyone else. Each and every one of us who sits in this House, who serves as the voice of thousands of Ontarians from places we call home—we are all just like anyone else. Some of us understand the importance of this responsibility and the weight of this responsibility. Will Ferguson understood this very well.

Will was a regular guy who had an above-average desire to find out the challenges facing his neighbours and come up with ways to make their lives a little better. By all accounts, he did a very good job of that as city councillor and during his time in the Legislature.

Will Ferguson came from Kitchener, and everywhere he went, Kitchener came with him. He was tough, he never backed down, and occasionally that got him into a little bit of trouble. Sometimes it gets us all into a little bit of trouble. He knew what he wanted to get done and he wasn't afraid to do what was necessary. He didn't choose politics because it was safer; just like many of us

here today, he chose politics because he thought he could get something done for the people in his community. He had the courage of his convictions and he acted on them. And when the dust settles, our province and the people of Kitchener are richer for the time Will Ferguson spent with us. Thank you very much to the family.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their very heartfelt words. In a bittersweet way, it's a wonderful tribute as we come together, remove our shackles of partisan politics and honour one of our own. But more importantly, to the family, we thank you for the gift of your loved one.

As is the tradition, we will make a copy of Hansard and a video DVD available for the family. Thank you very much.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 /
Projet de loi 36, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur les aliments locaux,

The title of which is amended to read:

Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 and to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to provide for a tax credit to farmers for donating certain agricultural products that they have produced / Projet de loi 36, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur les aliments locaux et modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour prévoir un crédit d'impôt pour les agriculteurs qui font don de certains produits agricoles qu'ils ont produits.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 3, 2013, the bill is ordered for a third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 32, An Act respecting the Human Resources Professionals Association / Projet de loi 32, Loi concernant l'Association des professionnels en ressources humaines.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 3, 2013, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Grant Crack: I beg leave to present a report on the review of the Aggregate Resources Act from the Standing Committee on General Government and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Crack presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to commend all the members of the committee, legal counsel Mr. Jerry Richmond and Clerk Sylwia Przewdzicki for all the good work that they have done. They have travelled the province, and came up with an excellent report that thoroughly takes into consideration a lot of the input that was received by the committee from stakeholders, and also following the tours of many of the great aggregate facilities and sites around the province.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Crack moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Mr. Speaker, I beg your indulgence that I can introduce Paula and Evan Davis, who are here because they have an interest in this bill.

434753 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2013

Mr. Balkissoon moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr22, An Act to revive 434753 Ontario Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

ELECTION AMENDMENT ACT (MPPS' RECALL), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI ÉLECTORALE (RÉVOCATION DES DÉPUTÉS)

Mr. Hillier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 124, An Act to amend the Election Act with respect to the recall of members of the Legislative Assembly / Projet de loi 124, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale en ce qui concerne la révocation des députés à l'Assemblée législative.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, the Election Amendment Act (MPPs' Recall), 2013, amends the Election Act to provide a process by which a member of the Legislative Assembly may be recalled and a by-election held to fill the vacant seat. An eligible voter in a member's electoral district can apply to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issuance of a recall petition. No application for the issuance of a recall petition may be made during a year following the member's election or one year before the next scheduled general election

1540

A proponent of a recall petition has 60 days to return the petition to the Chief Electoral Officer with the signatures of eligible voters in the electoral district who represent at least 25% of the total number of votes in the last election held in that district. In that case, the seat of the member of the assembly becomes vacant. A by-election is then held to fill the vacancy. The recalled member is free to be a candidate in the by-election.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

MINING INDUSTRY

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Today, I'm honoured to be joining the Ontario Mining Association as we host Meet the Miners Day at Queen's Park. Meet the Miners Day, as I think many of you will know, is an annual tradition dating back more than 25 years that gives members of the Legislature and senior mining executives the opportunity to exchange ideas to help continue to build a healthy mining sector.

This year's theme is "Mining Builds Communities," something our province has excelled at by working with the mining industry to strengthen the economies of diverse communities across the province. Our government has worked very hard to advance our province's standing as a preferred jurisdiction for mineral development. We're working very hard to ensure that mining remains an important contributor to the provincial economy.

Here are some of the facts: Ontario is among the top-10 mineral investment jurisdictions in the world. As a result, 24 new mines have opened here over the last 10 years. That's more than anywhere else in Canada. There are some notable examples. I could go on, but certainly

we think of the De Beers Canada's Victor diamond mine, Ontario's diamond mine near Attawapiskat; the extraordinary Detour Gold project near Cochrane, one of the greatest gold deposits in North America; and the AuRico Gold Young-Davidson mine near Matachewan as well comes to mind—great examples of projects that are creating extraordinary employment.

The fact is that currently Ontario is home to 41 operational mines with a total mineral production valued at an incredible \$9.2 billion last year. I think many will recall that in 2011, our government pledged to support the opening of eight new mines over the next 10 years. I am certainly very pleased to report that four new mines have already opened since then. With an additional six new mining and mine expansion projects in Ontario expected to be operational by 2017, the future continues to look very, very bright.

Our government's record on mining is a very strong one. Let's go back to 2003. Exploration expenditures in the province of Ontario were \$193 million, and that was an impressive figure at the time, perhaps. But in 2012, we reached over the \$900-million mark, which simply says that we are the leading jurisdiction in Canada for exploration.

In terms of mineral production itself, I referenced it earlier, but the value of mineral production in 2003 was \$5.7 billion. In 2012, we reached \$9.2 billion. Again, Ontario is the top province in Canada for mineral production. More activity at our metal mines has increased the total number of direct jobs in mineral production from 24,000 in 2003 to 27,000 in 2012. And there are an additional 50,000 jobs associated with the manufacturing and the processing of mineral products.

Exciting discoveries in the Ring of Fire area in northern Ontario hold the promise of being Canada's first world-class chromite deposit, with strong potential as well for nickel, copper, zinc, gold and other minerals. Certainly, in consultation with First Nations and the companies that are involved with these projects, as well as undergoing the necessary approvals, we look forward to unlocking the potential of this region and creating thousands of jobs for Ontarians.

Our government continues to work very hard to maintain a superior investment climate for the mining industry and especially, may I say, for communities in the north.

In accordance with our Mineral Development Strategy, which we brought forward in 2006, the Ontario government is committed to advancing mineral development for the benefit of all Ontarians. This includes working in consultation with stakeholders to modernize elements of our Mining Act to promote sustainable mineral activity that respects the environment, aboriginal and treaty rights, communities and individuals, and brings clarity and certainty for the industry, something they are always calling for. It also involves providing a tax regime that supports a dynamic and innovative business climate that will help mineral development companies succeed, as well as attract more investment and opportunities to Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, our work is absolutely paying off. We have in place a number of government initiatives, one of the most significant ones being the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program, that have helped mining companies in northern Ontario reduce their electricity costs, sustain jobs and maintain their global competitiveness—very vital aspects. There are currently seven mining companies in the province representing 13 facilities that participate in that program, which is helping to support a thriving mining sector in Ontario.

Speaker, we are also working to implement the Mining Act modernization process that began with the passage of the modernized Mining Act in 2009. We brought a 100-year-old piece of legislation into the 21st century by introducing rules and structures that will improve how exploration activities are carried out in the province.

Modernization of the Mining Act and the supporting regulations very much is the result of very comprehensive consultations. Between January 2010 and January 2012, two years, over 70 discussions and consultations were undertaken with aboriginal groups and communities, industry stakeholders, environmental organizations, and municipal representatives.

Currently, Speaker, we are in phase 3, and we are proposing to make changes to the Mining Act that will allow us to implement online staking.

We have also very strongly supported the Strategic One-on-One Export Marketing Program, a training initiative that helps companies develop sound strategies to gain access to new global markets. To date, 53 companies have graduated from that program, and their innovative products and services from Ontario are finding their way around the world. I had an opportunity to be at one of the graduation ceremonies, and it was remarkable how excited they all were. These were major companies that were involved in this process.

Measures like these promote long-term sustainability and global competitiveness in Ontario. Our work in advancing mining reflects our government's very strong commitment to supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate that will help companies succeed while also drawing investment and opportunities to Ontario.

Speaker, Meet the Miners is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate Ontario's thriving mining sector and also to learn how this remarkable industry, led by so many remarkable people, contributes to Ontario's prosperity. Certainly, I do want to invite all members to join us this evening at the Meet the Miners reception in rooms 228 and 230, I think starting sometime after 5 o'clock. I can assure you that you will meet some amazing Ontarians.

On behalf of our ministry, I want to say to everybody who is here today how much I am looking forward to continuing working with all stakeholders to make Canada's greatest mining jurisdiction even greater.

CHILD CARE

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to stand in the House today to celebrate Ontario's dedicated child care workers

and early childhood educators. Today marks the 13th annual Child Care Worker and Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day here in Ontario.

This is a special day to recognize the important role that child care workers and early childhood educators play in the healthy development of our children, and to show our appreciation for the countless hours they spend enriching our children's lives and preparing them for success in the future. They are true leaders in early learning. Each and every day, they provide quality child care and guidance to children across the province, focusing on each child's physical, intellectual, social and creative development.

1550

Our government is working to modernize child care so that it is high quality, seamless and responsive to parents' needs. Child care workers and early childhood educators are valued partners in our ongoing efforts. Through their passion and commitment, they give our children a strong start in life. Our child care workers provide us parents and grandparents with peace of mind, knowing our kids are getting the guidance, support and encouragement they need to flourish and reach their full potential. They make it look easy and natural, but I know how diligently they work to support our children.

With their training and work experience, early childhood educators are critical in full-day kindergarten classrooms, where they work alongside teachers as a team to support children as they begin their journey of learning.

A recent study with Queen's and McMaster Universities showed that students who attended full-day kindergarten improved their readiness for grade 1 and accelerated their development in every area. Results like these show us that this transformational program is giving Ontario's children a better start in school and preparing them for success in grade 1 and beyond.

And approximately 7,000 early childhood educators working in the 2,600 schools that offer full-day kindergarten across the province are vital to that success. By the time the program is fully implemented in September 2014, more than 10,000 early childhood educators will be working in all of the province's publicly funded elementary schools, making a huge difference in the lives of more than one quarter of a million children each year.

On this special day of recognition, I want to thank all of the child care workers and all of the early childhood educators in Ontario for contributing to a strong, publicly funded education system and a high-quality child care sector. Through their hard work and commitment, they're giving our children a brighter future, providing families with the support they need and building a stronger Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to rise in the Legislature today on behalf of the PC caucus and our

leader, Tim Hudak, to welcome the Ontario Mining Association and all the miners here to Queen's Park today for Meet the Miners.

The Ontario Mining Association—of course, that includes Chris Hodgson, former MPP, who is the president of the Ontario Mining Association—was established in 1920 and is one of the longest-serving trade organizations in Canada. The mining industry has historically been an important driver of economic growth in Ontario, and it continues to do so today. Cities like Sudbury and Timmins were built on the mining industry, and the Ring of Fire development has the potential to be a major driver not only for northern Ontario, but for the entire province.

Advances in technology have made mining more efficient and safe. Current market conditions have even allowed previously closed mines to be revisited and reopened. In my riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka, Ontario Graphite has reopened the Kearney Mine, which will result in renewed economic growth and bring new jobs to the community. The Kearney Mine is expected to create 80 full-time jobs and up to three times more spinoff positions through the 30 years that it's projected to be in operation. It is clear that the mining industry has been an essential part of Ontario's history and will continue to be an important part of its future.

But in the short two and a half minutes I have to respond to the minister—we can do better. He talks in glowing terms of the new mines that have been opened. I would say it takes a long lead-in time to open those mines, and I suspect next year's figures won't be as good as the ones that were talked about from last year. I would just list off quickly the fact that in the short time this government has been in power, the negative policies they brought into effect will have a negative effect going forward—like tripling the diamond tax just since the first new De Beers diamond mine was about to open. Right now they're contemplating an increase in the mining tax. The Far North Act: They put half of the Far North off-limits, and we don't know where we're going to find the next new mine. That's a real blow for the mining tax—and on and on it goes.

We can create an environment where Ontario can lead again, as it once did, back in the time when our current leader, Tim Hudak, was Minister of Northern Development and Mines and Ontario was rated number one in the world for mining exploration. I look forward to that day.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Rob Leone: I rise on behalf of the PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, in recognition of Child Care Worker and Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day, to thank child care workers and early childhood educators for giving Ontario's youngest learners the best possible start.

The first piece of legislation that I introduced in this Legislature was the Protection of Child Care Centres Act. It was a bill designed to help our child care centres in Waterloo region face the effects of full-day kindergarten

in our region and to protect their existence. It's something I care very deeply about. I know that each and every day, our young children are in the care of our early childhood educators, who help nurture our kids' natural curiosity for learning, for playing and for doing all the things we expect of our children.

My kids have used, and continue to use, our child care centres in Waterloo region. They are an essential service to my family and to many families right across the region. To Brittany, Kellie and Debbie, who are our current child care providers; to Jo and Judy, who are the administrators of our child care centre; and to all early childhood educators across the province of Ontario, I want to offer our sincere gratitude and our sincere thanks for the good work they do each and every day in helping our children get through the day and become successful learners when they get into school. On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, once again, I'd like to thank our early childhood educators.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Mantha: First, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all my friends from the Ontario Mining Association and their affiliated members to Queen's Park today, on behalf of our leader, Andrea Horwath, and our NDP caucus members.

Over the past few years, I have been fortunate enough to meet with many of these companies and tour their mines and facilities. I always look forward to these tours and to meeting the hard-working men and women in the mining sector. This is always a great learning experience for me.

As mining is one of our economy's important engines, the province needs to pay more attention to the needs of this industry. Mining has created tens of thousands of jobs across the province, but there is an opportunity to do more, and we should be doing more.

But in order for mining companies to come and invest in Ontario, they need to see that the government has a clear and concrete plan for mining in this province. The Ring of Fire offers First Nations, the north and the province huge economic opportunities and much-needed jobs. Because of this rare discovery, Ontario continues to attract the largest share of mineral exploration in Canada.

Despite all the potential, there are still challenges when it comes to developing the Ring of Fire and the mining industry in general. Government and industry need to work together to ensure that barriers to developing mining are removed so that badly needed jobs are created and our economy is reinvigorated.

Over the past few weeks, we have seen what can happen when the government's unwillingness to take real action is threatening billions of dollars in northern investment and leaving communities that are dependent on resource development out in the cold. Members of this government have repeatedly paid lip service to the important role the government plays in developing resource commodities by working with industry, affected

communities and First Nations, but have so far failed to take concrete action.

As mining critic, I will continue to push this government to take action. It's so obvious that we need a plan; we need a framework; we need guidelines. Mining companies, First Nations, northern communities and citizens of this province want to see this project moving forward so that everyone can reap the economic benefits.

I extend my thanks to the many companies who have made their way here today, and I look forward to chatting with them over a few drinks tonight.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my honour to rise and speak to Child Care Worker and Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day. As you probably know, parents and children who are able to access high-quality, licensed child care are very happy to have access to it. It makes a huge difference in their lives. For children, it can be incredibly enriching. It gives them a head start in life. For parents, it makes the difference between making ends meet and not making ends meet. The dedicated women and men who take care of our children day after day expand their horizons, make sure they're safe and nurture them through the day. Those women and men deserve our appreciation.

1600

I've had the opportunity in my own riding to go to Dandylion daycare centre for a meeting with the board, the administrators and some of the child care workers, and it was a typical child care centre meeting. There was a group of us adults in the centre on very small chairs, with very low tables, eating some food, while children ran in circles around us. They said, "Just get used to it. That's the way we meet here." I said, "It's the same with me. I have the same experience at work." They were comforted to know that they weren't alone in the way they met.

Boulton Avenue Child Care in my riding: I went to their fundraiser a few weeks ago. It's a small child care centre; it operates out of the Royal Canadian Curling Club. They are raising money so that they can finance the transition as all-day kindergarten comes forward. It's posed huge challenges for them. But those parents and those child care workers have come together to make sure that those children are looked after.

All too often, Speaker, parents, families and children that need licensed daycare can't get it. As you know, only one in five children who needs care is in licensed care. As you know, the cost per child can be \$1,000 and more per month, which is an extraordinary burden on people. Too many parents rely on an unlicensed system where, as we know, we have seen tragedy in the last year to two years.

On behalf of the NDP, I want to express my thanks to those child care workers and early childhood educators for all that they've done for the children of this province and urge all of us to support a larger licensed non-profit child care system.

PETITIONS

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to present a petition on behalf of my constituents. It reads as follows:

"Whereas approximately 20% of Ontario's electricity is produced at the Darlington generating station" in my riding of Durham;

"Whereas in addition to refurbishing the four existing reactors at the Darlington the building of new capacity is important for the future of Ontario's manufacturing sector and for jobs and investment in our Ontario;

"Whereas a study by the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters in 2012 concluded the building of a new two-reactor plant at Darlington would directly employ more than 10,000 people and would support employment for an additional 10,000 others in Canada for approximately a five-year period;

"Whereas Ontario's Ministry of Energy says Ontario Power Generation has already spent an estimated \$180 million in preparation proceeding with the two new Darlington reactors;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Ontario's elected MPPs and the provincial government reaffirm their commitment to the complete refurbishment of all four units at the Darlington generating station and that the Ontario government reinstate the original plan for the completion of two new reactors at the Darlington generating station."

I'm pleased to sign and support it and present it to Sophia, one of the pages here.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: If you'd indulge me, Mr. Speaker, a point of order: I just want to introduce two people who are here in the gallery, James Thompson and Paul Codd, who are from the ODSP Action Coalition and Workers' Action Centre.

Applause.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Yes, welcome.

Now to the petition.

"Petition to raise the minimum wage:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's minimum wage has been frozen at \$10.25 an hour since 2010, and some workers earn even less due to current exemptions in the Employment Standards Act; and

"Whereas full-time minimum wage workers are living at nearly 20% below the poverty line as measured by the Ontario government's low-income measure (LIM); and

"Whereas minimum wage should, as a matter of principle, bring people working 35 hours per week above the poverty line; and

"Whereas an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$14 per hour would bring workers' wages 10% above the LIM poverty line; and

"Whereas raising the minimum wage will benefit workers, local businesses and the economy by putting money in workers' pockets to spend in their local community;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately increase the minimum wage to \$14 per hour for all workers and thereafter increase it annually by no less than the cost of living."

I'm adding my signature and giving it to Benjamin to be delivered to the table.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Phil McNeely: "Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas small businesses not only employ thousands of Ontarians with well-paying jobs, they also play a vital role strengthening Ontario's economy; and

"Whereas providing tax relief to small and local businesses strengthens the economy and creates a business climate that attracts investment and helps create jobs; and

"Whereas the government has taken several other initiatives to making Ontario the most attractive place to do business in North America;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 105, Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013, introduced on September 24, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Finance."

I send this forward with Anal.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the purpose of Ontario's Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is to 'provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.' RSO 1990, c. E.19, s. 3.; and

"Whereas 'all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.'—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature. Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for allowing me to present this petition.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Jonah Schein: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas escalating rental costs are making Ontario less affordable and leaving many tenants financially insecure or falling into poverty;

"Whereas tenants living in residential apartments and condominiums built after 1991 are not protected by rent control guidelines;

"Whereas this has created an unfair, two-tier system of tenant protection in Ontario where some tenants have no protection from large and arbitrary increases;

"Whereas fixing this simple loophole in the law will help protect tenants and help make housing more affordable and secure for thousands of Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario acts to protect all tenants in Ontario and immediately move to ensure that all Ontario tenants living in buildings, mobile home parks and land-lease communities are covered by the rent control guidelines in the Building Code Act, 1992, and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006."

I support this petition and I will give it to page Benjamin.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly signed by a number of individuals from Toronto and Hamilton. It reads as follows:

"Whereas small businesses not only employ thousands of Ontarians with well-paying jobs, they also play a vital role strengthening Ontario's economy; and

"Whereas providing tax relief to small and local businesses strengthens the economy and creates a business climate that attracts investment and helps create jobs; and

"Whereas the government has taken several other initiatives to making Ontario the most attractive place to do business in North America;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 105, Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013, introduced on September 24, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Finance."

I agree with this petition. I've signed it and I will send it down with page Christina.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Carleton Place and District Memorial Hospital (CPDMH) has been appealing to the Ministry of Health for redevelopment funding and approval since 2003; and

"Whereas population growth and demand for services at the hospital have increased beyond the hospital's ability to serve under current conditions; and

"Whereas both the community and neighbouring municipalities have demonstrated their support for this redevelopment through the donation of land and other financial contributions; and

"Whereas continued delays in the approval and funding of this redevelopment will have a severe negative impact on the delivery of health care services not only for the people of Carleton Place, but also for people in Beckwith township, Mississippi Mills, Drummond/North Elmsley, Lanark Highlands, as well as negatively impacting Stittsville and Kanata;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and other involved agencies approve funding for the development of CPDMH before these communities find themselves facing a crisis situation."

1610

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from the people of northeastern Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government" has made PET scanning "a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas, since October 2009, insured PET scans are performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with Health Sciences North, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through Health Sciences North, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of" the northeast, including my good page here, Jack, who is also from my riding.

I will sign it and ask my page to bring it to the Clerk.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas Scarborough residents north of Ontario Highway 401 and east of Don Mills are without a rapid transit option; and

"Whereas a strong transit system is critical for increasing economic development and tackling income disparity; and

"Whereas this geographical area continues to grow and the demand for strong rapid transit continues to increase; and

"Whereas Sheppard Avenue is a major artery for automobile traffic for commuters travelling from suburbs

to downtown Toronto, and travelling from suburb to suburb; and

"Whereas ground-level rapid transit would increase traffic, restrict lanes for automobiles, and add further risk for pedestrians and commuters at dangerous intersections along Sheppard Avenue; and

"Whereas demands for underground rapid transit along Sheppard Avenue have been part of public discourse for over 50 years; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario previously approved a plan from the city of Toronto to extend the Sheppard subway line from Downsview to Scarborough Centre; and

"Whereas an extension to the Sheppard subway line will require contributions and co-operation from the city of Toronto, the province of Ontario and the government of Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support the extension of the Sheppard subway line east to Scarborough Centre; and

"To call upon the government of Canada to contribute multi-year funding for the construction and operation of an extension to the Sheppard subway line."

I fully support it and I will give my petition to page Victoria.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Todd Smith: I have a petition here from some residents in Belleville in my riding.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning to delist OHIP physiotherapy clinics as of August 1, 2013, which represents cuts in physiotherapy services to seniors, children and people with disabilities who currently receive care at designated OHIP physiotherapy clinics; and

"Whereas people who are currently eligible for OHIP physiotherapy treatments can receive 100 treatments per year plus an additional 50 treatments annually if medically necessary. The proposed change will reduce the number of allowable treatments to 12 per year; while enhancing geographical access is positive, the actual physiotherapy that any individual receives will be greatly reduced; and

"Whereas the current OHIP physiotherapy providers have been providing seniors, children and people with disabilities with individualized treatments for over 48 years, and these services have been proven to help improve function, mobility, activities of daily living, pain, and falls risk;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To review and reverse the decision to drastically cut OHIP physiotherapy services to our most vulnerable population—seniors, children and people with disabilities; and to maintain the policy that seniors, children and people with disabilities continue to receive up to 100

treatments per year at eligible clinics, with a mechanism to access an additional 50 treatments when medically necessary.”

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Jonah Schein: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a healthy connection to our food system is vital to the health and environmental, social and economic well-being of all people in Ontario;

“Whereas too many young people in Ontario do not have access to nutritious food and grow up without basic food literacy or food skills;

“Whereas food bank use in Ontario is at an all-time high and over 412,000 individuals every month cannot afford to feed themselves or their families;

“Whereas poor diet and lack of access to nutritious foods is a leading cause of poor health and growing health care costs in our province;

“Whereas urban sprawl and poor planning continue to destroy valuable farmland, water resources and local food systems;

“Whereas sustained investment in local food and increased support for Ontario-grown foods will strengthen our food and farming sector and create jobs in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That this government strengthen the Local Food Act as part of a broader provincial strategy to put food first;

“That the government develop a provincial strategy that recognizes the importance of food to our environment, health and social and economic well-being.”

I support this. I'll affix my name to it and give it to page Jack.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

“Whereas small businesses not only employ thousands of Ontarians with well-paying jobs, they also play a vital role strengthening Ontario's economy; and

“Whereas providing tax relief to small and local businesses strengthens the economy and creates a business climate that attracts investment and helps create jobs; and

“Whereas the government has taken several other initiatives to making Ontario the most attractive place to do business in North America;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 105, Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013, introduced on September 24, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Finance.”

I support the petition. I affix my signature, and I give it to Christina.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Todd Smith: This one comes from the Frankford and Trenton area in my good friend's riding, but somehow it ended up on my desk.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the newly created Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with new membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Liberal government stop their job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately.”

I agree with this petition and will send it to the table with Nicholas.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Jonah Schein: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Enbridge Canada is proposing to reverse the flow of the Line 9 pipeline in order to transport western oil and tar sands oil through the most densely populated parts of Ontario;

“Whereas this pipeline project proposes changes to the pipeline that merit serious consideration, like the increase in oil carrying capacity and the transport of significantly more corrosive oil through the pipeline;

“Whereas this pipeline passes under cities and major rivers and a spill would risk the drinking water and health of millions of Ontarians and cause permanent damage to ecosystems;

“Whereas Line 9's reversal will have impacts that must be analyzed beyond the National Energy Board hearings held by the federal government;

“Whereas the government of Quebec has already indicated its intention to conduct an independent review of the line reversal impact, including the flow of oil sands crude into Quebec;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the province of Ontario acts in the best interest of the health and environment of the province and conduct a full environmental assessment of Enbridge's proposed Line 9 reversal and capacity expansion projects.”

Speaker, I agree with this. I'll put my name on it and give it to page Jack.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À SOUTENIR LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 29, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act / Projet de loi 105, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'impôt-santé des employeurs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate. Further debate. Last call for further debate. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to give the governing Liberals an opportunity to debate their own bill, but they seem to have lost interest in their own piece of legislation. I have not.

It's interesting. Bill 105 does a little bit. Basically, it will mean to a business that has a payroll of \$450,000 that it raises the exemption for OHIP. They call it the small business some kind of act when, in fact, it's An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act. They call it the small business improvement or something. That's just Liberal words to try to imply that they're actually doing something positive. I'm going to talk a little bit about the negative things that they've been doing for small business in this province. But I don't think they've brought out a bill to commemorate their work.

Anyway, this does a little bit of good. It will amount to some \$900 of savings to the business if your payroll is at the \$450,000 level. I suppose that if you hire, if you kick that up to \$455,000, there's no more exemption. So it's kind of like it's almost a negative for hiring new people if you're right at the threshold. But they don't think of those things. They like to throw this stuff out there and try to pretend that they're trying to help small business and somehow they're in favour of it.

1620

In the 10 years that I've been here, I have yet to speak to a small business person in this province who has said to me, "I really like what the Liberals have done for small business." I have not met one. I'm not talking about I haven't met many; I haven't met one. Even the ones—you realize there are some out there who vote Liberal anyway because it's just the way they are. They cannot for the life of them find something positive to say about the Liberals' record when it comes to supporting small business.

I want to give you a little example of what they've done to small business and business in general. You know, when you're out on the street, I think it's fair to say that one of the things that just galls people the most is the absolute disaster they've made of the energy system, because they've got this myopic view that they've got to build these inefficient, costly wind turbines. Then they try to pretend that these wind turbines have gotten us out of coal, when there's not a single person who has an ounce of grey matter when it comes to the energy sector who would agree with them. What we do have is about 10,000 megawatts of gas that we didn't have before. We've got around 2,000 megawatts active in wind, but it's extremely inefficient.

I'll give you an example. This morning at 10 o'clock the Ontario demand for electricity was 16,928 megawatts. Of that, 11,342 were coming from our nuclear

generators; 4,542 were coming from hydro, our water power; 1,450 megawatts were coming from natural-gas-fired plants—ones that they haven't cancelled; 141 megawatts were coming from coal; and wind—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: How much?

Mr. John Yakabuski: —50 megawatts. Fifty megawatts were coming from wind, and yet, most of those wind generators get paid every time they produce a megawatt even when it's not at the optimum time. They've made some changes; not enough.

The global adjustment this month: 5.18 cents per kilowatt hour. Last month, it hit a record at 8.74 cents—a record—8.74 cents per kilowatt hour.

Let me just tell you what that means to business in Ontario. I have a letter here from a businessman in my riding. I'll have to put on my glasses, because the printing is rather small.

The printing is small, but the numbers are large. For the month of September 2012, his bill for 120,771.97 kilowatt hours—he's a supermarket, a grocery store—was \$12,084.46. The provincial benefit, or the global adjustment—

Interjection: It's not a benefit.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, it's not a benefit. They stopped calling it—even the Liberals couldn't get away with that one anymore.

The global adjustment was \$4,625. So on a \$12,000 bill, \$4,625 was the global adjustment. But that was 2012. In September 2013—this is how they're helping business in this province; this is the Liberal plan for helping business—his consumption was 116,831.05 kilowatt hours. So his consumption went down by 3.25% from September 2012—

Interjection: I bet his bill didn't.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —but his bill for 2013—remember, I said \$12,084.46, his bill in September 2012—was \$17,422.01. The global adjustment portion of that bill: \$10,185.33.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to read his whole email, but to give you some sense of the frustration that this man is going through—and I spoke to him on the phone yesterday and I can assure you, he is beside himself. But he's just representative of every small business out there. This is just one letter, one email. But his final line: "It's too bad we can't have a government shutdown here. It would give us all a break." Imagine that: That's what it's come to—looking for a government shutdown because he cannot take any more of this government.

That's one letter. I've received another one, a copy that was sent to Premier Wynne and to Bob Chiarelli, the Minister of Energy. This is a gentleman that—they run a business, produce tape for hockey, sports, NHL teams. The headquarters are in the United Kingdom. Their energy bill is up over 40% this year. Head office is looking at this operation and saying, "Can we keep this going?" We all know what happened in Hamilton. Is anybody going to try to tell me that the costs of energy in this province are not a factor when companies make decisions that they're going to shut down plants here and

move the production elsewhere? Yes, there's less requirement for steel production right now because of global issues, but when they make the choices, they're going to close the plants that cost them the most to run and operate the plants that cost less to run.

The energy policy in this province is a disaster for all businesses: small, medium and large. If we're ever going to capture and get Ontario back to where it once was, to be the leader in this Confederation, the leader in Canada, we have to have energy security. We have to be able to say to businesses, "This is the place to establish your business. We have reliable power at a reasonable price." This government has taken that away. Shame on them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think it's impossible not to react to the sense of frustration that has been expressed by the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He does express frustration very well, I will say that. Actually, we share some of the anger and the frustration on the lack of action on the energy file. There's no doubt about it that as a file and as a factor in contributing to the economy, the energy file has been completely messed up.

Actually, we've tried to draw attention on several fronts to the Liberals, and we're going to continue to do that. With respect to Bill 105, though, and how it affects small businesses, obviously we've said from the outset that we want to see this bill get to committee so that we can actually build some real plans into it. We lobbied for components of it. We've said on several occasions that it's unfortunate that the bill didn't come to us in the first place in a different form—stronger on a number of issues; youth unemployment, for instance.

In Kitchener–Waterloo, there are 1,000 start-ups. A majority of those are started by youth and new graduates from university, and they're looking for some assistance. From a confidence perspective, they're looking to this House to come to the table with some ideas. We've certainly brought that forward through the budget process. We're pleased that the government actually listened to the stats on youth employment.

1630

The unemployment rate for youth in Ontario has hovered between 16% and 17.1% in 2013, much higher than the national youth unemployment rate. We're going to be bringing this lens to the committee session on Bill 105, and I look forward to continuing the debate and the discussion for the rest of the day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It gives me great pleasure to respond to the member from Nipissing–Pembroke, especially to talk about his party's glorious time in energy in Ontario.

We all remember when we had the blackout, and we also remember the brownouts. It was not their fault. I also was told that the Premier at the time was playing golf. It was very hard to get him back to town to make

sure that he addressed the Ontarians who were stuck with no energy at all.

If you think that the increase in electricity is costly to industry, I'll say to you that no electricity is a lot more costly to industry. We have a reliable energy system in Ontario thanks to this government, and I know that the business community in eastern Ontario, in my riding, is very pleased. When we want to attract new industry to Ontario, the guarantee that they will have electricity for their industry is very important.

Mr. Speaker, 55 members of the Legislature have already spoken on this bill. Everything has been said. When they say that we're not interested, we are interested in this bill moving to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I really appreciate the passion and the sense of obligation that our member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke brings to the House. He has just hit the nail spot-on when he speaks about the real issues affecting small business in Ontario, and that is operating costs. The number one line item, if you will, in that issue is energy costs.

I find it really rich, because you know what? When families of seven today have their hydro turned off because they can no longer afford their energy costs, they don't give a hoot about the history lessons that this government chooses to lay on this House with regard to what happened over a decade ago. It doesn't matter. What matters is today and how we're going to move forward.

Bill 105 only really tinkers around the edges in terms of bringing real relief and support for small business. We need to pay heed to what's coming from the opposition side in terms of addressing what really matters. We can't turn a blind eye to the escalating costs of energy.

I tip my hat to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for recognizing the issue that the green energy mess has created. We tried to talk about this in a committee yesterday, and all of a sudden, the crowd went wild and we got shot down because we determined that they're incredibly embarrassed by the extra costs that the Green Energy Act has created throughout this province for small business, manufacturing and our families.

We draw attention to the fact that at one point, the Premier said that job loss was a myth. But look what happened with US Steel yesterday. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 105. It's called the Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013; it could just as well be called the small bill supporting small businesses act, 2013.

Like many bills we've seen in the last two years in this government, this bill takes a step forward that will support small businesses. It takes a bigger step forward when it comes to communications on the part of the government to further their own cause, which is a problem that we've seen in this House.

I don't often agree with the official opposition, but I do agree with the comments made by the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, when he suggests that he hasn't—I think we probably share something in common. When I'm talking to people in my community of Davenport, I don't hear from them a loud message—in fact, I get no message—saying, “Thank you very much. What you're doing is helping us survive as a small business community.”

I do hear from small businesses that they're having an incredibly difficult time in Toronto. I hear from my community that they want to support their small businesses, and yet small businesses are closing every day.

The debate here has apparently turned into a conversation about energy costs, which I think is one part of the equation and something we should talk about. The history lesson is important, too, because, quite frankly, we've been on the wrong path for a long time. I think that both the government and the official opposition have pursued a path of private power that has made some people very, very wealthy and has left the people in the province paying the bill. That continues to happen over and over again. We've seen it most recently with the gas plant scandal. There is a crisis when it comes to energy planning in this province. We look at the government across the way, and every day it seems like they've got something else to do, and every day it's the people in this province who get stuck with the bill.

Speaker, small businesses will do far better when we support people in this province, to actually be able to have something to spend in their small businesses, and that is something we need help with at this point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has two minutes.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I want to thank the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the member for Huron–Bruce and the member for Davenport. I can't comment on them all, but I do want to thank them.

I did want to touch on—because that seemed to be the one that was a little out there—the response from the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. I would ask her to do me a personal favour. I would ask her to provide me with those emails or letters from those people who are thanking her for this government's policy on electricity. I must caution you: They cannot come from your staff or members of your riding association. I want them to come from actual, real people on the street, paying a hydro bill or trying to run a small business, either a homeowner or a small business. I want those to be real, true letters—true confessions, as they used to say. And I'll tell you what I will do in return. For every letter you give me from someone saying they're happy about this government's energy policy, I will bring you a hundred from people who are sick and tired of the disaster that this government has made of energy in the province of Ontario, and sick and tired of what they're doing to the hydro bills of hard-working families who are trying to put bread on the table and can't afford their

electricity. A hundred to one: That's my pledge to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services—because I know that in the real world, those people don't exist. They don't exist in Ontario.

There's no one who pays a hydro bill who believes that this government's energy policy is on the right track. It is a disaster. I don't think they have the gumption to reverse it. We'll do it for them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'm pleased to add my voice today to champion the cause of small business in the House.

It seems to me there really isn't anything small about small business; the people who are willing to start one dare to dream big. It's a big deal to start a small business. Many of these risk takers—and, yes, when you are starting a small business you are taking a big risk. According to the CBC—and I might say that's the large crown corporation where I had the privilege of working for 30 years—back in 2005, 115,000 new small businesses were started in Canada, and in the following year, in 2006, 100,000 small operators went out of business. Not all of those were part of the 115,000 that started up the year before, but you get the picture, Speaker. Opening a small business is a risky proposition. Yet it's accepted by almost everyone that small businesses are the backbone of our economy in this province and indeed right across our great nation. No one really disputes that. That's because when you look at the statistics—and they're pretty easy to find—at least to the end of 2010, the ones that I saw, the number of businesses in Canada with at least one employee on the payroll totalled more than a million; to be exact, 1,138,761. I didn't count them all; I just looked at the number. In round numbers, that's more than five million people working for small business, and that is more than 48% of Canada's entire workforce—48%, nearly half of the people working in Canada, earn their living in what we call a small business. Obviously, when we in this House hear those kinds of numbers, we'd better be paying attention to the importance of the issue in front of us here today.

1640

It takes a lot of guts to take the risk of opening up your own business, to put your name and reputation on the line, to pour your heart and your soul into a project, to work those extra long hours needed to get it off the ground, to make those tough hiring decisions, to live your dream, to take a chance, to breathe new life into a creation of your own and to hope, and sometimes pray, to break even. Never mind turning a large profit; let's hope you can pay the bills and just break even in your first year or two.

There's an interesting quote I came across from Go Broke, Die Rich: Turning Around the Troubled Small Business, by William Manchec. He says, “There are few experiences in life as painful and brutal as the failure of a small business. For a small business conceived and nurtured by its owner is like a living, breathing child. Its loss is no less traumatic than losing a loved one.”

To be perfectly honest, I've never owned a small business. I was a journalist for most of my working life. As a city councillor for seven years, I spent four years on the Olde Riverside Business Improvement Area. In the last three years on council, I served on the business improvement area advisory committee. We have nine BIAs in Windsor. There's the Downtown Windsor BIA, the Olde Sandwich BIA, the Wyandotte Towne Centre, Walkerville, Ottawa Street, Erie Street, Pillette Village, Ford City and Olde Riverside. And I'd be remiss not to mention the BIA in the town of Tecumseh as well.

I learned so much from the business owners on these BIAs: government red tape, high taxes, high energy costs, high rents, lack of incentives, lack of encouragement, little or no recognition for the community and the charitable work they do. It's almost universal. Small business people, those who drive our economy, say they could do much better and create more jobs if they had more respect from the three orders of government for the role they play in stimulating and growing our economy in Ontario. I find it tough to argue with that.

These are hard-working people who went out on a limb to start a business and who struggle to meet a payroll. They have no guarantees in life, no gold-plated pension plans like the people who are hired to run our large corporations. These are people who sometimes have to crawl out of their sickbed to get down to their storefront and open up because no one else is going to open the door for their valued customers. I believe we in this House have an opportunity today to do more for our small business owners in this great province.

Let's face the facts. More than 70% of all family businesses do not survive through the second generation, and 8% don't make it to the third. Small business owners are a special breed. They take enormous risks, and we should respect that. I know we in the New Democratic Party have enormous respect for small business owners. We believe in standing up for them and doing our part to help them achieve their dream.

Is there a magic wand out there to make all of these challenges go away? No, and I don't believe anyone on either side of the House would honestly say there is, but eliminating some of the taxes they've been forced to pay is a good start. Small business owners need to see that the members of the Ontario Legislature believe in what they're doing. In fact, I'm reminded of the insight provided by my friend and colleague from Parkdale-High Park in the House two days ago. She reminded us that while government members were patting themselves on the back for lowering the small business corporate income tax from 5.5% to 4.5%, the NDP government of Manitoba has zero tax on small businesses—none at all. And why? Well, that's because they recognize that small businesses create 85% of the new jobs in their province.

There are 60,000 small businesses in Ontario. Sure, we can have them pay less money in the employer health tax. We can even get rid of the small business tax for some of the smaller ones, and we can remove some of the red tape and regulatory burdens, but is it enough? Can we do more? That's the question.

Let me mention a small business in the city of Windsor: Patio Palace on Howard Avenue. Paul and Lucy Fanson started selling patio furniture and backyard barbecues while they were still in university about 25 years ago—business students with big dreams, a lot of ambition and very little money. They worked 18 hours a day at times, they worked seven days a week at times, and they built up a good base of loyal customers over the years. It's hard work, because they sell quality goods, Canadian-made products which must compete with the goods sold at Canadian Tire and Walmart—their products from China and elsewhere. But the Fansons survive because they offer quality goods and quality service.

People appreciate quality, and they like to be able to ask questions of someone who's been in the business for a number of years, as opposed to trying to get answers from someone who normally works in the garden shop or electronics. Small business owners can adjust their prices and delivery times to close a deal, unlike someone in the large chain stores selling foreign products.

But they face trials and tribulations like the rest of us. About eight years ago, Paul Fanson was at death's door. He needed a liver transplant, and time was running out. His kids were in their teens, he had all kinds of pressures on his business and on his health, and then, almost at the last minute, a donor was found and Paul's life was saved.

This is an exceptional case; I realize that. This is why we need more people in Ontario to sign up to become organ donors, but when he recovered, Paul Fanson went on to enjoy life all the more. His golf game improved; I know that for a fact. His wife, Lucy, cofounded a charity group which raises money for health care in the Windsor-Essex county area. That was their way of giving back to their community for supporting their business, but more importantly for helping Paul get a new lease on life.

I know them well, because my wife, Gale, was the cofounder, with Lucy Fanson, of the Do Good Divas. They met when Gale was working at the Canadian Liver Foundation. Yes, the Do Good Divas—I've mentioned them before, but what a great name. They raise about \$50,000 a year, and every penny goes into worthwhile health care projects in our community. It could be the cancer centre or one of the hospitals, but it's another example of a small business giving back to the community.

The profits from a small business stay in the community, as well. They don't go to a board of directors in some foreign country. Small business people support their own communities. That's why this bill is important. That's why this bill should be supported. That's why we should spend time discussing improvements to the legislation.

It's the right thing to do, it's the right time to do it, and I certainly support it, because small business is where jobs are created. If we lower their taxes and give them less paperwork to fill out, they'll have more time to boost their sales, more money for themselves and more opportunities to spend quality time with their families.

I hope we can all agree with this. I hope we can all agree in the legislation today that small business is a big deal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I agree with everything that the member for Windsor–Tecumseh has said. Let me tell you one other thing: It takes six and a half hours of debate for a bill to be referred to committee. This bill has been debated for 14 hours. Speaker, it's time it saw the inside of committee in order to be improved any further. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It was a pleasure for me to listen to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh speak to this bill. One of the things that came through loud and clear to me was that the member for Windsor–Tecumseh is far closer to the Conservative benches than just the few feet that are between our desks, talking about the red tape and the trials and burdens that small business people are faced with in this province and what this present government is failing to assist them with.

1650

I think the other important thing that I heard in the member from Windsor–Tecumseh's speech, it reminded me of this adage—it's a fairly new adage in Ontario—and the adage goes something like this: How do you start a small business in the McGuinty–Wynne Ontario? The answer is: You start with a large one and it will be a small business soon enough. That is really the message that this government has been dealing out—a bad set of cards for the business people in Ontario.

It's also interesting how the Liberal responded to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh's comments, and that is that he considers this debate a filibuster. He considers this debate to be worthless—and worthwhile in that we should just run every bill to committee after six and a half hours of debate. To hell with small businesses; to hell with learning what their problems are. Let's just get it to committee so they can get their press release done. No thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to rise and speak. I want to commend my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh who, we should acknowledge, has just been in this House for a few short months and I think has already captured the imagination of people here. It's not often that people are actually listening to speakers in here.

We had the rapt attention of the Conservative Party over here—which is good to see, and good for you to hear the policies of the NDP. In fact, this bill that we're debating here today, the substance of it was brought forward by the NDP, and we said, "We need to support small businesses, of course." If you'd been listening for all this time, you would have heard that. Hopefully, with the contributions of our new colleague here, you'll be able to hear that message, and we want people across the province to hear that.

The NDP is on the side of small business. What we want to stop in this province is to see the kind of gaping holes in our tax system that allow the biggest corpora-

tions to walk away with our hard-earned revenue. That was part of our initial recommendation here. I'm glad to see that that been brought forward in this legislation to make sure that we're actually providing support to small business, to the folks who are generating jobs, to the folks who are on the ground, who care about their communities, and that we're not just giving a free handout to those who couldn't care less about their community—

Ms. Catherine Fife: And about jobs.

Mr. Jonah Schein: —and don't care about jobs.

I'm pleased to hear your comments though, Percy, because it shows me that you are in touch, that you are thinking about the people who are struggling. If you go around this province, you'll know that the people running small businesses are doing it because they love what they do. They love their communities, they're taking care of their families, and they're happy to employ somebody. That is something that we need more of. We need a government that cares as much as the small business owners in this province about creating jobs.

We will be supporting this legislation. We will be sending it to committee after it's had its full debate, and we'd like to strengthen it and make sure that we are supporting small business across this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I thought the member from Windsor–Tecumseh made an enormous contribution to the debate this afternoon. He talked about a small business operator in his riding.

I just want to make a plug this afternoon for my good friend John Walsh. John Walsh owns Peterborough Landscape Supply; it's on the old Keene Road, just outside of Peterborough, close to where I live. Right now, Peterborough Landscape Supply has a 40%-off sale for all remaining stock in that business. So anybody who is listening today, and members opposite, go to the Peterborough area: John Walsh, Peterborough Landscape Supply. A good deal; a good small business operator. I recommend him highly.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I just want to say that Mr. Walsh and his wife, Debbie, are very involved in the Ennismore Eagles hockey association. They've been sponsors of teams; their twin sons play. It just goes to show you, as the member from Windsor–Tecumseh said, how small businesses do great things in their community, give back to the community.

Let's support Bill 105 to help the small business in the member from Windsor–Tecumseh's community and John Walsh of Peterborough Landscape Supply.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Windsor–Tecumseh has two minutes.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. I don't know quite how to—I'll get to it in a minute, I guess. Thank you, Minister.

Yes, to my good friend the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, who mentioned how

close we are in our chairs: I agreed with the member on Bill 74, the so-called EllisDon bill. I want him to know that, as well.

It's an interesting process to stand up and do your two minutes, and I believe my friend from Davenport reminded us all that the NDP is on the side of small business and has been on the side of small business.

I mentioned earlier that I used to work at the CBC. And I worked in private radio for a while, where they would say, "We'll be back in a minute after these commercial messages." When the Minister of Rural Affairs, from Peterborough, was commenting about—and I appreciate it. Thank you very much for the commercial plugs for people in your riding. Hey, fair game, but I hearken back to those days where we would say, "We'll get back to regular programming after these commercial messages."

What we're saying to small business is that they can take what we say here today to their municipalities and say, "Look, the province is behind us. How about we sit down with you and have a discussion about what you can do for us in a joint partnership at the municipal level?" Then after those discussions, small business owners can go to Ottawa and Parliament Hill and say, "Look, we're working with the good folks at Queen's Park. We're working with our good friends in our municipalities. Now we need to work with you on Parliament Hill to come up to the table too and help us jump-start this economy." Because if anyone is going to jump start the economy, it will be the small business communities and small business owners in Ontario and across this country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate. The member from Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker. Good afternoon. I hope you're having a wonderful time in the chair with this enlightened debate on An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act.

Before I get into the meat of my remarks, I would like to acknowledge the work by my colleague, my seatmate from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, not only in his opposition to the health tax when it was implemented, but as you'll recall, he was very vocal in defending men and women in Canada's military who live in his riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, who serve in the Canadian Forces and who are subject to this tax despite the fact that the Canadian government pays for their health care.

I also came to this assembly having a bit of experience with the Canadian military, only insofar as my husband was in the military and also had worked for the department of defence, feeling that it was really important for us to eliminate the health tax for those who are serving in Canada's military, as well as in the RCMP. I supported his call at the time and I actually put forward a motion myself. It's interesting today that we are debating this reduction for small business, which we do support, but I think it is an acknowledgment by this Liberal government that this health tax was problematic. It has been unfair, and it's time to have that discussion in this chamber. I'm glad that here, after eight years, we're doing that with me.

With respect to small business—I think that this is important—our party is on record as saying that we will support this bill that the finance minister has brought forward. But I know, for example, that many small businesses across the province aren't just struggling with the reality of this health tax; they're also struggling with other matters. They're struggling with high hydro rates. In fact, we met with some very big employers in this last hour—myself and my leader, Tim Hudak, as well as our mining critic, Norm Miller—and we talked about some of the substantive problems that are being dealt with by the mining industry.

I would say that their number one concern would be the rising cost of energy. In fact, what they told us—and I'm sure that they have told this to the minister as well as others—is that in terms of doing business in Ontario, anywhere between 15% and 50% of their cost of doing business is their energy rates. I think that signifies a real problem that we have, particularly in the north, when it comes to promoting business, whether that's small business, whether it's big business. At the end of the day, I think that we are all intelligent enough in this chamber to understand that when business thrives and succeeds in the province, our public services thrive and succeed, and therefore our people thrive and succeed. That is a major concern of mine.

1700

As you know, I have recently, in the last month, been appointed the energy critic for the Ontario PC Party.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Good appointment.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate that. It's obviously been a very exciting time. It is the number one issue raised by consumers of energy across the province. That's not just businesses; it's also individual consumers and ratepayers, people who are trying to heat their homes. That's why it becomes much more important for us to have, I think, a discussion on small business that addresses not just one segment of how they do business, but a multitude.

We have, of course, our new critic for small business, Lisa Thompson, who does some work in the energy field with myself on green energy. I think she has some very good ideas, and she will be a very exciting and talented individual for us to put out there, because she'll put the time in to find out what the big issues are. I'll bet you that if she were to speak to this bill today, she would probably raise a number of issues. The health tax is an issue that we have to deal with. Energy rates, as I said, are an issue that we'll have to deal with. Red tape is a major issue for our small businesses.

So while it's important that there is a—oh, I don't know—seven-page bill in front of us that really isn't very prescriptive on how we can fix the small business environment and climate here in the province, I think that when it comes to putting forward small-business initiatives and how we can help them, my colleague from Huron—Bruce will be able to put forward some very substantive ideas. I know we've already done that with our job creation task force, as well as with some of our critics from the various areas in our white papers.

It's really incredibly important that we not just talk about the health tax, but that we talk about the whole picture. Since I've come to this place, I've noticed that not only are we losing jobs by the hundreds of thousands—over 300,000 manufacturing jobs—but we're starting to see rural communities and small towns across Ontario absolutely hollow out. You drive down Main Street, and there are a lot of businesses that were once there and aren't anymore.

I have a beautiful riding, Nepean–Carleton. It's the largest in the city of Ottawa, geographically and population-wise, and I am very proud of the great small businesses that we have there, because they rely, obviously, on a federal civil service town. Many people that they would sell their services or their goods to would be federal civil servants, or even working in the high-tech sector, so in many ways we have been insulated. In many ways we haven't, because of those issues I've raised: the health tax, the energy prices and the red tape. It's been difficult.

But as I drive down Robertson Road, for example, in Bells Corners, we used to be a bustling community, where I once used to work for John Baird, who was the then-MPP for Nepean–Carleton. It was thriving. There were businesses everywhere. And because I lived so close to Bells Corners, I walked and shopped there. I get my groceries there from time to time, and I'll drive down and I'll notice so many businesses, small mom-and-pop businesses, out of work.

I can't begin to tell you how that hurts me as their public representative, because I see a failure in public policy as the root cause of their failure. It bothers me, because if I look back 10 years ago, when I was working for John Baird, or even a little bit before that, I would look at these communities as thriving, and that's not the case.

I look, for example, at another place, one of the fastest-growing communities in all of Ontario. I also represent it. It's a few kilometres away from Bells Corners; they were both in the former city of Nepean. Barrhaven is growing very, very quickly. We have a lot of businesses coming from the rest of the city of Ottawa, or elsewhere in Ontario, that want to set up there because of the population expansion and the diversity that we're bringing into our community. One of the concerns I have in Barrhaven is that, if things keep going the way they're going with the hydro increases and the tax increases, it's going to be significantly difficult for many of those new businesses to succeed and stay in business.

I hear it all the time. I hear it from Alex Lewis, who is the executive director of the BIA in Bells Corners. I hear it from Andrea Steenbakkers, who is the executive director of the BIA in Barrhaven. It genuinely gives me concern for the viability of small business, not only in my community but across the rest of the province, because, as I've said, in Nepean–Carleton we are fortunate to be within the city of Ottawa—well, I guess that's debatable on any given day, because we were amalgamated, but we are fortunate to be in the National Capital Region, I guess

I should say more precisely, and that gives us the opportunity to have that base of public servants whose jobs are far more secure than those in the private sector. That is why I like to raise their issues, because if it's happening in my community, it's probably happening, to some extent, in a much more difficult fashion elsewhere.

Myself and my colleague from Etobicoke–Lakeshore are, I guess, the urban members in our caucus, and I look at many of my other colleagues who represent rural communities—and I worry about small business in rural Ontario. I'm proud to represent a variety of rural communities within the city of Ottawa limits. I'm speaking expressly of North Gower, Kars, Manotick, Osgoode, Metcalfe and Kenmore.

In the few seconds I have left, let me talk about North Gower. They're a community that is living this hydro nightmare because they are going to be forced to deal with these wind turbines. They're not a willing host, and they know that their neighbours down the road in Bells Corners that are struggling to stay in business are going to have to pay for high hydro hikes as a result of the government's disastrous green energy policy. That is, I think, a perfect example of the Green Energy Act assailing rural communities, and just 15 minutes down the road, businesses going out of business. I couldn't make that point more clearly than the businesses that are going out of business, sadly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to respond to some of the comments that have been made by the member from Nepean–Carleton. I just want to thank the member from Huron–Bruce for reminding us that the Premier, not that long ago, called the job losses in the province of Ontario a myth. It did create a sense of outrage, almost the same level of outrage that we sometimes hear from one of our favourite members over here to the right, and that is, that that suggests a serious disconnect. We definitely will concede that as a party.

But when we came forward with a recommendation through the last budget process, we wanted to make sure that there was an elimination of the loophole that allowed large companies not to pay employee health tax on the first \$400,000 in the payroll, but this piece also implements an increase in the exemption. We are still trying to work with this government. They certainly are not making it easy. The frustration, though, that has been expressed by the member from Nepean–Carleton, I think that has been felt across all of our ridings.

The previous comments from the member from Windsor—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Tecumseh.

Ms. Catherine Fife: —Tecumseh that these family businesses that have been traditional cornerstones of the economy in this province are just not surviving past that second generation, and there's a whole host of reasons why that has not happened. Certainly, the energy factor plays into it, as has already been mentioned.

There is an overall lack of confidence in our economy, but we feel strongly on this side of the House that it's our

job to work and build the confidence for the economy. That is why we are going to try to make Bill 105 stronger. We are going to try to bring those local voices of family businesses, small start-ups and the unpaid interns in the province of Ontario to this piece. We use this as an opportunity to get the job done. That's why we will be supporting it as it goes to committee, but we're not letting them off the hook. We're just going to be working in a different way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister for Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I've been advised that this bill has now been debated for 14 hours. That's a lot of debate. One would think, by now, the opposition would have been able to say anything they can say about this bill. I think it's pretty obvious that the opposition parties are extending debate on Bill 105, and they're deliberately doing that. I guess they can do that according to our rules, but I think it's unfortunate because, frankly, if they cared about jobs, as the member from Nepean-Carleton talked about, they'd want to get on with this bill. This bill will cut taxes for 60,000 Ontario small businesses. They want to see those tax cuts. We want to move on that; I don't know why the opposition would want to stall that.

1710

The one thing I would say, though, is I want to correct the member for Nepean-Carleton. She absolutely wrongly stated that this province is losing jobs. You shouldn't be talking down our economy like that. We're gaining jobs; in fact, we've increased by a net 477,000 new jobs—a net 477,000 jobs—since the recession. No matter how you add that, that's a gain, not a loss. I think those hard-working small businesses in our economy that are creating a lot of jobs deserve a lot more respect than they're getting from the opposition when they make those inaccurate assumptions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: One of the unfortunate parts about this government's policy is called the College of Trades and how they've got people so upset with these rates that they have to pay now just to keep their licences. And now they've got the trades police running around; they're going to shut down hairdressers and the people who cut hair. It's just absolutely ridiculous.

I would like to comment on the member from Nepean-Carleton. She comes from a riding that I know a little bit about. In fact, I was welcomed there a couple of years ago by the people in North Gower—and I can actually say that now, North Gower—who welcomed me there to that community, because that's where my ancestors settled, in that area. It's a beautiful part of the country, and it's too bad that they're fighting wind turbines right now: it really is. It's just going to mess up that whole community.

I had a chat with a fellow in our riding by the name of Nuhn—Nuhn Industries—and he said, "For gosh sakes, get out of my way. Get out of my way. Let me do business." That's all he wants—no more regulations. The

\$900 to this man is going to mean two car payments, something like that? But it costs him so much money and red tape filling out government forms just to conduct his business. He said, "Get out of my way. Let me do my business. I'll play by the rules, but no more. I'm tired of this stuff."

I know we're going to support this bill, but really, \$900 to a man of this size—that's nothing. If you could cut down red tape, cut down some of these other regulations that they're forced into, such as the College of Trades, it would save him more money than \$900, and he'd be very appreciative of it.

Hydro rates are a big concern to everybody in my riding, as they are in the riding of the member from Nepean-Carleton.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm disappointed to hear the comments made by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, as if speaking about the reality in this province and the difficult time that people are facing is speaking down or somehow talking down the province. This is ridiculous—as if it's impolite to talk about what's going on.

I was talking recently to a young man named Joe, who works in the downtown area. This is a young person who wants to work, who loves his work and who spends hours trying to get to work each day.

This bill includes something that we put forward, which was making sure that businesses that have more than \$5 million in payroll are not exempt from paying the health tax and that we are supporting small businesses, but in the process, this government missed an opportunity to actually raise some revenue. There was \$90 million missing that we put forward as the NDP, and that \$90 million could have provided bus service; it could have paid for some operating funds; it could have meant that we would actually have service that starts early in the morning. Not everyone is able to afford to live in the downtown core, and yet people work in the downtown core.

The reality is that there is a problem here. The reality is that young people in this province want to work. The reality is that young people are graduating from universities and colleges with the highest debt in history, that we have the highest tuition anywhere in Canada and that young people are more and more desperate, that they're working for nothing. We haven't had a raise in the minimum wage in years, and beyond the minimum wage, we have people who are willing to work for nothing. We have a problem with unpaid internships. Speaker, if you listened to the other parties in this House, sometimes you would think that people need to be forced into work. People want to work in this province, and they'll do anything to get a job. It's too bad we can't offer some good jobs in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nepean-Carleton: two minutes.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I would like to first and foremost thank the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, the member

from Wellington and the member from Davenport for, I believe, contributing in a very positive way to the debate over the plight of small business in the province.

I would like to now talk a bit about the member from Scarborough, who is the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. He did a few things that I think need to be discussed here.

At what point does that member think that I should not be allowed to debate on matters that are important to my constituents? The members on this side, whether you agree with us or not, are allowed to stand in our place, allowed to debate legislation and allowed to defend the people who sent us here, and the minute you think we're not allowed to do that is the minute, maybe, you should resign your seat or perhaps not run again, because you have missed the point of being here.

In addition, I would like to point out that he is sadly misinformed with respect to the job losses in this province. If he thinks we are gaining jobs every day, he is wrong. If he thinks there are no financial hardships out there for our small businesses, he is wrong. If he thinks the College of Trades is a good thing for Ontario's small businesses, he is wrong. If he thinks this government's public policies with respect to small business and finances are positive, he is wrong, and that is why we are here.

What I also cannot understand with this minister is how he cannot accept "yes" for an answer. I stood in my place, I explained some of the challenges that my constituents are facing, but I said that, at the end of the day, I would support this legislation. He can't accept that because he is so wildly partisan that he has to manipulate what is being said here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, I will be supporting this bill, but I do want to say a few things about this bill, because, first and foremost, it only scratches the surface of problems that this government has burdened our small business people with in this province. It will do very, very little to stop the hemorrhaging of job losses and business closures in this province.

Just to illustrate that, I got a note the other day from a small business owner in my riding. I won't use his full name, but his first name is Dennis, and he sent me this note. He sent it to me and to the federal member for my riding. He says:

"Can't sleep, too many thoughts. Just thought I would let you and Scott"—Reid—"know that as the owner of" this restaurant, "I have chosen to give up. I am 40 years old, work seven long days per week, and have made many positive changes to the restaurant and the community I live in. My hydro bill now per month is more than my mortgage, with the continued threat of more increases to come. I cannot and will not stand by to watch my customers share the pain with me by increasing my prices over and over again...."

"I'm just letting you know how the corrupt and idiotic decisions made by our government is ruining many

aspirations and local Ontario businesses. I, as well as my 15 employees, may contact you again someday in the EI or welfare offices."

That was a letter I received a little while ago from a constituent. I called up Dennis—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'd ask the member to withdraw a certain word he used.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

I phoned up Dennis, and he told me that five years ago his hydro bill was \$400 a month. It's now over \$1,600 a month.

1720

I will say that it causes me concern listening to the Liberal government debate this bill. I heard the member from Mississauga—Streetsville, the government House leader and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities all refer to this debate in—they denigrated this debate. They got up and said that there was no need to debate this bill any further in this House; that after six and a half hours of debate, we should not debate any further.

If they had their way, Dennis's message would not have been heard in this House, and his message is every bit as important as the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities' or the government House leader's. I cannot believe that ministers of the crown here would suggest and demand that members do not uphold their responsibility and do not advocate for their constituents and engage in debate on this important matter.

There is much more about this bill, and I wanted to share a couple of views, just to put this in perspective. Between 2001 and 2009—which are the most recent years for data from Stats Canada that's available—the number of people employed in minimum wage jobs in Ontario has more than doubled. We've gone from 207,000 people working at minimum wage to 452,000. That's 45% of every new job created in Ontario in that period of time that was a minimum wage job—45%.

If you compare that to the rest of Canada, the rest of Canada, without Ontario, actually saw the number of people in minimum wage jobs fall by 20,000 people. The rest of this country has seen a reduction of minimum wage jobs. We've more than doubled minimum wage jobs' participation in our economy—absolutely atrocious.

When the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities wants to spout numbers and figures about how well they've done, I'd like him to remember that one, where they've created the most minimum wage jobs in Canada.

One study found that 51% of businesses in agriculture and food processing wanted to expand their workforce here in Ontario in the next five years, but unfortunately, the respondents said that barriers such as zoning costs, the cost of utilities and the lack of a skilled labour force would prevent them from doing so.

Once again, that speaks to their apprenticeship program and their College of Trades programs. We have people who want to hire our young people, like Dennis, like so many others in this province, but they can't because of this government.

I want to share a few other constituents' concerns which they brought forward directly to me. Jamie Wagner owns a small company called Bluewater. He has an innovative new septic system that operates at greater efficiency, takes up less space and is half the cost of a conventional septic system. It has been approved in three provinces and all the American states. In Ontario, he has been waiting for over three years, navigating the bureaucracy. There's still no end in sight and there are still no approvals for Jamie.

How about this one? I received a call from a fellow who owns a company in Ontario called Sparklewash. He has a mobile pressure-washing system, and he goes out and takes graffiti off buildings and sidewalks and what-not. His name is Dave Trefethen. WSIB classifies his mobile pressure-washing system as a demolition and form work contract. Under pressure-washing, he would pay \$3.73 per \$100 of payroll. However, because WSIB says he is into demolition and form work, he pays \$18.31 per \$100, \$15 more per \$100 on his payroll taxes—fighting for years with WSIB.

Richard Bennett—the fantastic job that the Liberals have done informing tradespeople about the College of Trades—along with countless other people, has had his licence suspended for not complying with a requirement he was never properly made aware of, with the new College of Trades.

Speaker, a paper mill in my riding, Strathcona Paper—the global adjustment charge on their energy bill is greater than the energy bill that they get. Over 50% of their energy costs are global adjustments. It's an unknown, moving target every month. Strathcona Paper can't plan. There's no certainty in those jobs, as well.

A couple just recently came in to see me: Malcolm and Peggy Kirkpatrick. They build, service, repair and maintain assisted-mobility devices—walkers, wheelchairs, a host of different products. They came in to see me because they get paid through the Ministry of Health's Assistive Devices Program. They're a hard-working couple. They work and work and work. They do everything by the book. It is commonplace for that program to take over a year to pay their bills to Mobility Care Co. in Perth, Ontario.

I phoned up the program manager and went through these lists of complaints of taking a year for a small business person to get paid by the government of Ontario. He said they're doing a pretty good job and they're doing a much better job than they were doing five years ago. They were actually at 60% of their bills getting paid within six months, and he thought that was pretty good—60% in six months.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to compliment the member to my right from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington for accepting the challenge from the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, when he had suggested that there certainly couldn't be anything else to add to this debate. When you hear about the example

given by the member about hydro rates going up by more than a mortgage payment, and 15 employees about to be in the unemployment line or in the welfare line, it certainly drives home the seriousness of what we're talking about here today.

The business community, Speaker, is primed to do its part. Many of the small business owners are relatively new immigrants to our province. They chose to come here to start a new life, a life based on hope—sometimes a prayer—and a promise and an expectation that if you invest your hard-earned money, if you work hard, in many cases from sunrise to sun-up, if you do it seven days a week, and keep an eye on your money, your business will grow. Sometimes that's all it takes. However, more often than not, that's just not enough. It's not enough because of unforeseen circumstances, bad luck or misfortune, because of government red tape, unwarranted delays, taxes that are too high, rents that are increased without merit or warning, poor hiring decisions or, indeed, because of escalating hydro rates. The reasons are many, and we in this chamber can't smooth them over, and for sure we can't guarantee success. But we can set the stage and do what is within our power to level the playing field, to give an equal opportunity to make sure there are government offices and employees who are able to get things done in a hurry.

We should not hurry the debate on this very important matter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

1730

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I don't know what country these people live in. I had the Hamilton Port Authority—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Would the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—whom I have to listen to yell when I'm not speaking—just be quiet for a moment?

Hamilton Port Authority: Twelve new businesses, the highest tonnage ever; they have run out of land. They were in my office because Hamilton's waterfront is exploding with employment and new investment. They're asking to buy land from the private sector to be able to turn it over.

A 163% job recovery, compared to 50% in the US and less than 50% in the UK: 80% of jobs require university, college or a trade.

According to the federal government, 700,000 skilled jobs—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Would you be quiet?

Mr. Speaker, this man interrupts all the time. I sat quietly through his very long speech; I'd like the same courtesy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Minister, I understand your dilemma, but if you get into an altercation with the member, I suggest you take it outside.

I would remind the member from Renfrew that it is nice to listen occasionally to what the minister has to say.

Continue.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: That's not too polite.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A point of order?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Your comment about the speaker, it's a bit uncalled for—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Would the minister like to explain herself further? I'm confused with her comment.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: You said we like sometimes to listen to what she—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I think you're reading in something that's not there, but that's fine. That is definitely not a point of order, and if you'd like to discuss it with me after, I'd be happy to accommodate you.

Continue.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We've had a lot of carping from the other side about not having debate. I'd like to at least have my two minutes, Mr. Speaker.

In my constituency, Sunil, a friend of mine who credits the university education he got at Waterloo, our health care system, and the amazing quality of life in the city, has taken a company that didn't exist and has created over 1,000 jobs. The average income in that company: \$80,000.

Five per cent of companies generating over 50% of jobs are auto sector—the best ever.

The steel sector is challenging—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. I'm sorry, Minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes, I spent half my time. Mr. Speaker, I just hope you have a bit more order in here today, thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would like the minister to retract that comment. With all due respect, you threw the first punch at the member over there and you kept it up, so you wasted your time, not me.

Questions and comments? The member from Nepean—Carleton.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: No, Carleton—Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure where the member across is coming from either. When I drive to Toronto to come to work here, I drive down Highway 7 and I see closed businesses all the way down the road: restaurants, gas stations, hardware stores. When I walk down Yonge Street once in a while to see what's going on on Yonge Street or have a bite to eat, I see all kinds of small businesses that aren't there anymore—blackened windows that are closed up. So across Ontario, all of us here from both parties know that small business people are having a tough time. They're going out of business; the hydro bills are putting them out of work, like the member from Renfrew—Nipissing explained to us very clearly—and the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington. We've had a very clear picture drawn for us that businesses are having a tough time because of what this government is doing to us, and that's just one of the things.

This bill is doing precious little to help anybody. A little bit of an extension of an exemption for the smaller business is next to nothing; that won't even cover a month's hydro bill. For bigger business, what do they do but put a limit in there so that they get no exemption. Really, it's a negative, I would say. It's a waste of time; it's a very bad bill. It misreads the situation entirely on what's wrong with small business in Ontario—or what's wrong with government; there's nothing wrong with small business. Hydro rates are putting them out of business, red tape is putting them out of business, and this little piece of fluff is doing nothing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to be able to rise in this House. I think it is an honour to be able to debate in this House and to debate at length. I think some of the comments from the Minister of Transportation—he is also eager to debate in this House. We've had other comments from the Liberal Party, from the government saying that we've had enough debate on this issue, and I think the minister's comments are ample proof that there is debate to be had on both sides.

I'd like to take the rest of my time and comment on the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington. He brought forward issues that are important for businesses in his riding, for people in his riding. He added significant points to the debate in this House. There are issues like that in all our ridings. I mentioned a few days ago Barret from Temagami Electrical.

But I'd like to talk about a different business I have, and it just fits under the small business side. I have a new mine opening in my riding, a small mine. I'm not going to mention the names because it might get them in trouble, actually. He called me up and says, "You know, John, when we're done this project, I'm going to write a book on how maybe you shouldn't start a business in northern Ontario"—because it's not even the rules; it's the attitude. It's not, "How can we help you?" It's "How long can you wait?" That's something that this bill doesn't really address at all. But there's a problem a lot of people in the government seem to have—they're so worried about not taking a risk or making a decision, they make no decisions at all, and that's what's hurting small business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington has two minutes.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, I'd like to thank the members from Windsor—Tecumseh, Timiskaming—Cochrane, Carleton—Mississippi Mills and the Minister of Transportation for their comments. I'm sure, had circumstances been different, the Minister of Transportation would have been able to provide some thoughtful insights into this in his comments, except he was cut short for unforeseen reasons.

However, what he did say I think needs to be addressed. We have to recognize that each member in this Legislature represents a certain area and has certain

perspectives that may not be shared elsewhere. But that doesn't diminish their perspectives; that's the purpose of having 107 members, to share those experiences.

As the minister said, yes, there are some good things happening down in Hamilton—not necessarily for Stelco, obviously, in Hamilton, but there are good things happening in different places. What I'm trying to impress upon this Liberal government is that they may be the exception, not the rule, throughout our smaller communities in rural and northern Ontario.

That statistic that I delivered, where people working at minimum wage in Ontario have doubled—we're the only jurisdiction that has seen that. The rest of the country would have had a reduction in minimum wage participation.

I would like the Minister of Transportation, if he is listening right at the moment during his other conversations, to take a look at those statistics about minimum wage. What are we going to do about that, Minister? What are we going to do to help alleviate the burdens and the hardships that small businesses are experiencing in Ontario, not just the big guys down in Hamilton or elsewhere?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 105. The Progressive Conservatives realized the need to reduce the burden on small business in 1996 when we first announced the \$400,000 employer health payroll tax exemption. Although the goal of this new bill may remain to help small businesses with this exemption, it's obvious that the purpose of the act does not achieve that end.

The government claims that this bill will help small business by increasing the employer health tax exemption by a mere \$50,000—one employee. But the members on the opposite side fail to realize that if the current tax-and-spend culture continues to exist, there won't be any small businesses to help.

Small business is the key component of Ontario's economy. I understand how difficult running a small business can be. I ran a small business in Oxford for nearly 30 years, but I never had to endure some of the hardships that the small business owners today experience.

1740

Since the summer of 2011, the government has increased hydro rates four times, the latest increase coming later this week. For businesses that are struggling to make ends meet or for entrepreneurs who are trying to start a business, every dollar counts. These hydro increases can singlehandedly limit the growth and even cause small businesses to fail.

The most recent hydro increase is a direct result of wasteful spending and the Green Energy Act. The government pays other jurisdictions roughly \$500 million to use excess energy Ontario shouldn't have produced. They wasted \$300 million by giving wind priority over hydro and another \$180 million in wasted nuclear efforts.

Couple that with the \$1 billion lost in relocating gas plants, and it's no surprise that hydro rates are forecast to increase 46% by 2017.

It's no surprise that 97% of Ontario's farmers reported that they are affected by the recent increases, and 60% of Ontario farmers reported that their operations would be significantly impacted. The point is that increasing a tax exemption for small business by \$50,000 is nowhere near enough when the government is increasing operating costs for those same businesses by a lot more.

Try and tell the farm supply stores in Oxford that they'll have to pay more just to stay open from 9 to 5. Then tell them, when they finally get home to make dinner, do the dishes and laundry, that the increases are high even for non-peak hours. Business owners are already doing all they can to save costs, but there's no escaping the hydro increase.

Mr. Speaker—and welcome to the chair—the Premier's telling agribusiness to double the rate of growth of their output, yet the Premier has done nothing to address the high price increases in their inputs. These entrepreneurs need government action that addresses the larger problem affecting their bottom line, not minor concessions.

It's not just hydro rates. Another large burden on a small business owner is red tape. There are over 380,000 regulations today on small businesses. How is a shop owner, already working tirelessly for every dollar he or she makes, supposed to set aside time to comply with all these different regulations? Every moment that a small business owner spends dealing with red tape is a moment they spend losing money.

Now the members opposite actually claim that an added benefit of this bill is that larger employers won't have to fill out an employer health return. That's not real action to address this. Now, these larger employers they're talking about are those that will move from \$400,000 to \$450,000, and they will not then have to fill out one form.

I think it's amusing that eliminating one of the 380,000 regulations is a selling point when small businessmen and women of Oxford and Ontario can't afford to deal with all the regulations they have. If the government were serious about helping small business owners, they would focus on eliminating unnecessary red tape.

Just last month, the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors released a report detailing their business strategy for the upcoming year. In the report, they list a major obstacle to success as the high and unavoidable costs resulting from increases in energy, water and waste management, making it less attractive to invest in this province. The AOFPP also goes on to discuss the regulatory burden that often obstructs growth initiatives, investment and speed to market.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business is all too familiar with these problems. In fact, in January, they will be promoting their fifth annual red tape awareness week. Red tape suffocating small business is a

massive problem. The CFIB reported that 68% of farmers and 62% of small business owners are discouraged from growing their businesses, while another 28% of farmers claim that they may not have gone into business if they had known about the regulatory burden. On average, an Ontario farmer spends nearly four standard 40-hour workweeks filling out government forms. Can we seriously expect these businesses and farms to succeed with such an amount of regulation?

The red tape affecting small business at times is almost comical. The CFIB reported in a story January this year about an Ontario small business owner and her ordeal with red tape. After filling out two mandatory statistical questionnaires in the same week, she received a third form asking how she felt about filling out government forms. You can't make this stuff up: three in one week.

It's disheartening to know the challenges that small business owners are facing. I know how hard small business owners work. These people are some of the most dedicated workers in the province.

Just this month in my riding, the Ingersoll District Chamber of Commerce handed out the 2013 awards of excellence. The winners included Bob Shelton, Maggie Carter, the Elm Hurst Inn and its general manager, Alon Gurman; Conestoga College; and a local entrepreneur, Dale Hurley.

Dale Hurley is a prime example of a dedicated small business owner. He started off sorting pop bottles and expanded to open his own grocery store in Ingersoll. That family store soon expanded over the next 38 years into a superstore that employs 185 people. I want to congratulate Mr. Hurley on his success.

These winners are just a few of the dedicated and hard-working members of Oxford's business community. It's a shame that despite their continued work and success, they have to deal with the recent hydro increases and the constant regulatory burden.

Dedicated small business owners like Mr. Hurley who have worked their entire lives to grow their business aren't helped by this act. Everyone in Ingersoll knows that Mr. Hurley is a perfect example of a small business, yet he is not eligible for this benefit. Some smaller businesses may be eligible for a slight increase to the employer health tax exemption, but if these larger problems are not addressed, there will be no one to exempt. Raising another sail doesn't do any good on a sinking ship.

Small businesses are being attacked by the government on all fronts. Higher hydro rates and excessive regulatory burdens are just some of the issues facing shop owners. A more recent development deals with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board premiums. Owners used to pay for their own insurance to make sure that their families were protected if they were hurt on the job. Now these same owners are forced to pay more premiums for less coverage. These owners are forced to choose between their original policies they paid for for years or larger WSIB payments forced on them by the government.

Issues like this need to be fixed. Small business owners cannot afford to pay for the mistakes of near-sighted policy.

Right now, times are tough. Small business owners have to be creative to make ends meet. Because of the barriers to small business that exist, that creative spirit could mean moving to another province. We're at a point where businesses are having too much difficulty trying to survive in this province. Because of this difficulty, I'm eager to see the government's fall economic statement.

When you change the rules of the game, you change the way the game is played. If the act is passed, companies near the \$5-million payroll cut-off will intentionally keep their payrolls below \$450,000. The 60,000 employers that will now be covered by the exemption will have no incentive to grow any further. This act will simply stop the growth of Ontario businesses. If the government truly wanted to support small business, they would consider doing so by lowering hydro rates and easing the regulatory burden on these hard-working men and women.

The increase in the employer health tax exemption is a band-aid solution to a systemic problem. I believe that the people of Ontario and small business owners in this province expect the government to put forward a real plan, not just a bill with a good name that does very little to actually help.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to speak this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to join the debate today, but first, I wanted to take a moment just to recognize the good work that you've done in the Chair this afternoon. I appreciate the patience that it takes to be in that position and the discipline enforced in this House so that people can actually listen to each other.

That said, with all due respect, I also want to recognize my colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane who, I believe, just had his first minutes in the Chair and perhaps presided over the most peaceful four minutes that I've ever observed in this House. Maybe he brings a country sensibility to this place, a pastoral sense of peace and calm. Maybe it's the voice of a cow whisperer or a horse whisperer that has been—

Mr. John Vanthof: Or Uncle Ernie.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I beg your pardon?

Mr. John Vanthof: Or Uncle Ernie.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Or perhaps it's a familial bond with a member who is speaking. But I just wanted to recognize that we had a historic moment here today in this House.

Getting back to debate, the member from Oxford put on the record again today the issue of red tape. This is something that we hear time and time again. Indeed, we need to make sure that we put policies in place that support small business, and make sure that there are not undue barriers put in place.

1750

I wonder: If there is so much red tape in this province, where can I go and buy some of this red tape? Where is there a small business in this province that actually sells red tape, if I need some?

Interjection: I'll get you some.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you. I'm kidding, Speaker.

Earlier today, we were having a debate between two sides of the House, and one side of the House, the government, said that we do not have a jobs problem in this province. I think other speakers in this House would agree that, in fact, there is a jobs problem.

I was happy to hear the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington talk about the growth in minimum wage jobs in this province. The one thing that would not involve any red tape at all, Speaker, is to make sure that people have enough money in their pocket, when they work a hard day's work, to actually be able to spend it in their local economy—that they don't have to go to the Walmart, that they can support a small business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to speak to Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013.

Certainly, we have to look at what is happening in Ontario and what is happening in Canada. We're so much better off than those countries in Europe and most of the states right next to us. We've had a 160% recovery of the jobs lost in 2009, and we've heard that before—that percentage is about correct. Almost half of the jobs created in Canada have been created in Ontario.

Our small businessmen are very much the backbone of the economy in Ontario. Generally, they're doing well.

These are tough economic times. The projection we got on the economic forecast today is that the GDP will be increasing next year, and it looks like an increase is going on three or four years, based on the US recovery. We're doing as well as we can in this economy.

This is a small step in improving things for businessmen. We didn't say it was the silver bullet. It's important legislation. Let's get it through. We've been speaking to it for 12 or 14 hours, people have said. It's a good bill, it's a positive bill, and I hope everyone in the House supports it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I want to thank the member for Oxford for pointing out some very eloquent and decisive facts regarding the hardships that the agricultural sector and small businesses here in the province of Ontario are facing under this Liberal government.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to small businesses in the agricultural sector—and I can attest to this first-hand. I just purchased two front tires—not the big tires that go on the back of the tractor, but the two front ones. It was \$1,600 for two tires—\$1,600. Part of the problem, again, with this Liberal government and over-regulation and the policies that they're bringing forward—when I spoke to

Mr. Thompson at the farm supply, one of the challenges that he has is keeping these tires in stock. These small businesses can't afford to purchase these now-large-ticket items and keep them in the backroom, on hand. He has to order them, and it takes a couple of days for those tires to come in. In the agricultural sector, if you're planting or harvesting, with this red tape, if you blow a tire, it could be two days before you get your tire fixed. That could be the difference between getting your harvest off in time and booked or not.

The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke made a very good point, too—I hear this in Northumberland-Quinte West, in the manufacturing sector and small businesses—about the price of electricity and the global adjustment. This is having a devastating impact on businesses, not only in Northumberland-Quinte West, but across the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to be able to stand in this House and comment on the remarks made by the member from Oxford. I've listened to the member many times throughout my life, but I've never listened to the member from the position of the Speaker's chair in the Ontario Legislature. For those two minutes—I must comment on not only our Speaker today—but it's a daunting place to be sitting, Speaker. It's truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Luckily for me, the House was very quiet, and everyone was listening with rapt attention to the remarks from the member for Oxford. He touched on issues that were important in his riding. He touched on red tape. We'll talk about red tape for a second.

Yesterday, in clause-by-clause for the Local Food Act, the NDP put forward a motion which was supported by the Conservatives. We put forward a motion to have one of the goals and objectives of the minister in the local food process be to streamline the regulatory process for small processors so that they could continue to have more access to local food. It wasn't supported by the government, so that amendment died. But it is very important. The member from Oxford touched on it several times.

We're not anti-regulation. We've said several times that regulation has to keep food safe, but regulation for the sake of regulation is killing small business, and we have to always be cognizant of that fact.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oxford has two minutes.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I do want to thank the members from Davenport, Ottawa-Orléans and Northumberland-Quinte West for their kind comments.

I also want to mention the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, who mentioned the different vantage point in which he was sitting when I was making the presentation. I would point out that it may be the first time that, because of his duty, he actually had to listen to me. I'm glad to hear that when he did that, in fact, it wasn't a negative that came out of it. I'm quite pleased to hear that he actually listened and maybe even appreciated what I said. So I want to thank him very much.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke a lot about the difficulties with this bill—not so much what's in it, but what isn't in it and what it doesn't do. It's such a small part of the challenges that small businesses are facing.

I think we really need to look at what the government is going to do, moving forward, to actually help small business, and I think the first opportunity when we can see that would be the fall economic statement. It's crucial that this statement include a plan for the economy of Ontario and specifically for small businesses. Hydro rates need to be addressed, the regulatory burdens need to be reduced, the books need to be balanced, and a vision to create jobs and further the economy of this province needs to be put forward. The best way to encourage investment in the province is to lead by example. The fall economic statement should be the time to set that example with a strong plan, with a vision to the future. I think that's really where we need to go here.

It's one thing to banter back and forth here about whether we should be debating this bill, whether we have a right to speak our minds here or whether we should move along—I would have thought that this debate could have been completed more equitably if we had actually had a debate from both sides so we could discuss where we were going, instead of just standing here pointing out what's wrong with it. We have nobody here coming across and defending it and putting the defence for this position.

I think we really need to look forward to some better action to help small business across the province of Ontario, from this government.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Continued from back cover

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. John O'Toole.....	4055
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	4055
Mr. Robert Bailey	4055

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Award recipients

Mrs. Jane McKenna	4055
-------------------------	------

John White

Mr. Taras Natyshak.....	4056
-------------------------	------

Friends of the Guild Park and Gardens

Ms. Mitzie Hunter.....	4056
------------------------	------

Grey Bruce Agriculture and Culinary Association

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	4056
----------------------------	------

All Tribes Christian Camp

Mr. Michael Mantha	4056
--------------------------	------

Seniors' identity card

Mr. Bob Delaney.....	4057
----------------------	------

Food banks

Mr. Robert Bailey	4057
-------------------------	------

Parc Royal 22^e Régiment

M. Phil McNeely.....	4057
----------------------	------

Transformer station

Mr. John O'Toole.....	4058
-----------------------	------

Will Ferguson

Hon. John Milloy	4058
------------------------	------

Mr. Michael Harris.....	4059
-------------------------	------

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	4060
-------------------------	------

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	4061
------------------------------------	------

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Social Policy

Mr. Ted Chudleigh.....	4061
------------------------	------

Report adopted.....	4061
---------------------	------

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	4061
-----------------------	------

Report adopted.....	4061
---------------------	------

Standing Committee on General Government

Mr. Grant Crack.....	4061
----------------------	------

Debate adjourned	4061
------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

434753 Ontario Ltd. Act, 2013, Bill Pr22,

Mr. Balkissoon	
First reading agreed to.....	4061

Election Amendment Act (MPPs' Recall), 2013, Bill 124, Mr. Hillier / Loi de 2013 modifiant la Loi électorale (révocation des députés), projet de loi 124, M. Hillier

First reading agreed to.....	4062
Mr. Randy Hillier	4062

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Mining industry

Hon. Michael Gravelle	4062
-----------------------------	------

Child care

Hon. Liz Sandals.....	4063
-----------------------	------

Mining industry

Mr. Norm Miller.....	4063
----------------------	------

Child care

Mr. Rob Leone	4064
---------------------	------

Mining industry

Mr. Michael Mantha.....	4064
-------------------------	------

Child care

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	4065
-----------------------	------

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Darlington nuclear generating station

Mr. John O'Toole.....	4065
-----------------------	------

Minimum wage

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	4065
-----------------------	------

Small business

Mr. Phil McNeely.....	4066
-----------------------	------

Environmental protection

Mr. Ernie Hardeman.....	4066
-------------------------	------

Tenant protection

Mr. Jonah Schein.....	4066
-----------------------	------

Small business

Mr. Bob Delaney.....	4066
----------------------	------

Hospital funding

Mr. Randy Hillier	4066
-------------------------	------

Diagnostic services

Mme France Gélinas	4067
--------------------------	------

Public transit

Ms. Soo Wong.....	4067
-------------------	------

Physiotherapy services	
Mr. Todd Smith	4067
Agri-food industry	
Mr. Jonah Schein	4068
Small business	
Mrs. Amrit Mangat	4068
Ontario College of Trades	
Mr. Todd Smith	4068
Environmental protection	
Mr. Jonah Schein	4068

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013, Bill 105,	
Mr. Sousa / Loi de 2013 visant à soutenir les petites entreprises, projet de loi 105, M. Sousa	
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	4069
Ms. Catherine Fife	4070
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur.....	4070
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson.....	4070
Mr. Jonah Schein	4070
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	4071
Mr. Percy Hatfield	4071
Mr. Bob Delaney	4073
Mr. Randy Hillier	4073
Mr. Jonah Schein	4073
Hon. Jeff Leal	4073
Mr. Percy Hatfield	4073
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	4074
Ms. Catherine Fife	4075
Hon. Brad Duguid.....	4076
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	4076
Mr. Jonah Schein	4076
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	4076
Mr. Randy Hillier	4077
Mr. Percy Hatfield	4078
Hon. Glen R. Murray.....	4078
Mr. Jack MacLaren.....	4079
Mr. John Vanthof.....	4079
Mr. Randy Hillier	4079
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	4080
Mr. Jonah Schein	4081
Mr. Phil McNeely	4082
Mr. Rob E. Milligan	4082
Mr. John Vanthof.....	4082
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	4082
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	4083

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 30 October 2013 / Mercredi 30 octobre 2013

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2013, Bill 122, Mrs. Sandals / Loi de 2013 sur la négociation collective dans les conseils scolaires, projet de loi 122, Mme Sandals	
Hon. Liz Sandals	4033
Mr. Bas Balkissoon	4036
Mr. Rob Leone	4038
Ms. Peggy Sattler	4038
Mr. Mike Colle	4038
Mr. Michael Harris	4039
Hon. Liz Sandals	4039
Mr. Rosario Marchese	4039
Ms. Soo Wong	4042
Mr. Rob Leone	4042
Ms. Peggy Sattler	4042
Hon. Liz Sandals	4043
Mr. Rosario Marchese	4043
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	4043

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. John O'Toole	4043
Mr. Peter Tabuns	4043
Hon. Michael Gravelle	4043
Ms. Peggy Sattler	4044
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	4044
Mr. Steven Del Duca	4044
Hon. Eric Hoskins	4044
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	4044
Ms. Andrea Horwath	4044

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Government's record	
Mr. Tim Hudak	4044
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4044
Government's record	
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	4045
Hon. John Milloy	4045
Horse racing industry	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	4046
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4047
Horse racing industry	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	4047
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4048

Cancer treatment

Mrs. Christine Elliott	4048
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4048

Mining industry

Mr. Michael Mantha	4049
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	4049
Hon. Michael Gravelle	4049

Research and innovation

Mrs. Laura Albanese	4049
Hon. Reza Moridi	4050

Manufacturing jobs

Mrs. Jane McKenna	4050
Hon. Eric Hoskins	4050

Manufacturing jobs

Ms. Andrea Horwath	4051
Hon. Eric Hoskins	4051

Northern Ontario Heritage Fund

Mr. Bill Mauro	4051
Hon. Michael Gravelle	4052

Construction industry

Mr. Monte McNaughton	4052
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4052
Hon. John Milloy	4053

Cataract surgery

Ms. Peggy Sattler	4053
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4053

Transportation

Mr. Joe Dickson	4053
Hon. Glen R. Murray	4053

Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Mr. Steve Clark	4054
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	4054

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2013, Bill 60, Ms. MacCharles / Loi de 2013 sur les conventions de services sans fil, projet de loi 60, Mme MacCharles

Third reading agreed to	4055
-------------------------------	------

Visitors

Mrs. Julia Munro	4055
Mr. Percy Hatfield	4055

Continued on inside back cover

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 31 October 2013

Jeudi 31 octobre 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 31 October 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 31 octobre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Good morning, Speaker. On this morning of Halloween, when we hope that all our children will be safe and sound tonight, the government is pleased to call government order G91.

WASTE REDUCTION ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES DÉCHETS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 29, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to establish a new regime for the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 91, Loi créant un nouveau cadre pour la réduction, la réutilisation et le recyclage des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le réacheminement des déchets.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: On this Halloween day, it's my pleasure to speak to this bill, which is full of tricks on the part of the government; not a treat here in Bill 91. On behalf of my constituents in Newmarket and Aurora, I want to register my concerns regarding this legislation.

The bill is entitled An Act to establish a new regime for the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002. It should be entitled An Act to establish a new regime of taxation, to shift eco fees from receipts to price tags and supersize Waste Diversion Ontario into a tax creation machine called the waste diversion authority. That's what the title of the bill should be.

Let's start with this so-called supersized Waste Reduction Authority. Speaker, what will it be empowered to do? Well, a lot of things that, quite frankly, if the people of this province fully understood the implications of this new mandate and the new empowerment of this authority, I believe they would have reason to be concerned. It has the authority to impose new taxes, to levy fines and arbitrarily decide how much Ontario businesses will pay for the blue box program—all consistent with this Liberal government's agenda of tax and spend, but the absolute wrong thing to do for consumers in this province and for

businesses who, quite frankly, are still struggling and are doing their best to cope with the burden of red tape and the over-taxation initiated by this government.

How many more rogue agencies and authorities does this government want to unleash on the citizens of this province? Not only are they creating another tax machine, they'll have no control over how high those taxes go or how much more businesses will have to pay into what I predict will become yet another hole, a black hole, compliments of this government.

As it stands now, Ontario businesses and municipalities split the cost of the blue box program. Property owners across this province are paying for the municipality's share of the cost of the blue box program. Under this bill, the government will empower this supersized Waste Reduction Authority to increase the amount that businesses will have to pay by hundreds of millions of dollars a year, without any offset to the property taxes.

It would be one thing if there was an offset and we could justify that on perhaps a revenue-neutral basis, but here's the clue: the fact that there is no offset on the one side, the fact that this new authority is going to be empowered to increase by hundreds of millions of dollars—now, the siphoning of money from businesses into this new authority indicates that this is yet simply another tax grab.

The result is that Ontario consumers will see the price of the products that they purchase increase because businesses will simply pass through the cost of this to their product. In the final analysis, it's the consumer who pays. Given the fact that consumer prices will increase and there is no offset on the property taxes, it is yet another double hit on the consumers and property owners in this province.

Why am I compelled to vote against this legislation? If for no other reason, it's the fact that I can't justify having anything to do with adding one more dollar of tax onto the backs of people who are already having a hard time making ends meet in this province or further putting up hurdles and increasing the cost to businesses struggling already in this province.

Beyond raising taxes and fees, both for consumers and businesses, is the fact that this legislation would spawn a legion of bureaucrats that will multiply and reach into every corner of this province. The last thing we need is more government, larger government, because we know where that ends: with higher costs yet far beyond the initial costs of this program.

We hear the minister tell us all of the supposed treats that are in this bill. What he fails to tell us is that he is

creating yet another bureaucracy that will far, far outweigh the benefits that he's telling us are in this bill.

So who can we expect in that bureaucracy? Well, let's start with the registrar. Of course, if you have a registrar, you have to have a deputy registrar, and I have no doubt that those deputies will feel that they'll need assistant registrars; and so we start the growth.

Of course, along with the compliance aspect of this bill, guess what we are going to hire? We're going to hire a host of inspectors who will be empowered with seizure responsibilities. They will actually have seizure powers. If you have that, of course what you need is another bureaucracy so that people can appeal on the actions of the inspectors, and so what the bill will do is give us another appeal mechanism, and that appeal mechanism is referred to as a tribunal.

0910

We're all familiar with tribunals. It's a bureaucratic process. It's expensive. People will spend a great deal of time—first of all, trying to figure out what the access is. But in order for any tribunal to do its work, guess what we need? We need more staff. So it doesn't take long for us, as we consider what we have in front of us here—it's the making of another massive bureaucracy that will bring with it a mountain of regulations, that will carry with it new provisions for penalties and fines and, in the end, make environmental criminals of innocent people right across this province, because the waste police are going to be chasing them.

Speaker, this boondoggle—we have to give thanks to the Liberal-NDP coalition government of this province. I have no doubt that the New Democrats will be supporting this bill, as they have been supporting most other bills. I believe the people of this province are waking up to the fact that we do not have a Liberal minority government; we have a Liberal-NDP coalition government in this province. That's what we have. If they would only be willing to tell us that. The truth of the matter is that there isn't—

Interjections.

Mr. Frank Klees: You know, it's ironic that the member from Essex stood up in the House just the other day and eloquently boasted about how incredibly proud he is to be a member of the NDP. God bless you for having that pride. But what he doesn't tell us is that he has to also take along with that pride the shame of being part of a caucus that boosts and has propped up this government that, in our opinion, and I believe in the opinion of the vast majority of Ontarians, has lost the moral authority to be the government in this province.

So when the people of this province start to look at the cost of this bill, let alone all of the other legislation and regulations that we have to pay for, when they start to go to the cash register and when they start to see the increasing bills and when they find it difficult, even more difficult, to make ends meet at the end of the day, I want to remind them that that will be compliments of the Liberal-NDP coalition government that we have in this province today. I believe that the day of reckoning will come. It's

not just about this waste management bill; it's about the waste that people have seen of their tax dollars, thanks to the Liberal-NDP coalition government of the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's quite interesting how you can—oh, I forgot to wish you a happy Halloween. You forgot to wear your costume, though, but we'll forgive you this time.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm going out as a Speaker tonight.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The member for—I always forget your riding—

Mr. Frank Klees: Newmarket–Aurora.

M^{me} France Gélinas: —Newmarket–Aurora says he's going out as a Speaker tonight for Halloween. This could be scary, actually.

So here we are discussing the Waste Reduction Act. There's a word in there that piques all of our interest: waste. Since I've been here and followed the government more closely, you realize that this is a word that applies to this government quite nicely, actually. We can lay out on page after page waste in our government. I guess this is what the member was trying to draw attention to, rather than the actual bill, which is the Waste Reduction Act, which has to do with recycling.

Has there been waste in the government? Absolutely. We just had a constituency week. I travelled throughout the 33 beautiful communities of Nickel Belt, and everywhere I went people waited for me with their hydro bills, with all of the new fees that have been added to their hydro bills, and then the total, which sometimes represents as much as a third of their pension income in northern Ontario, which is being spent on hydro. And the winter months are not here yet. It's going to get worse before it gets better, because you will be turning that light on way earlier than you were in September. And then we know about the \$1.1 billion wasted on moving gas plants. It's rather a good title for that bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Good morning, Speaker, and thank you for allowing me to enter this debate as well.

We have to go back a little bit. Ten years ago, in 2002—11 years ago—the former government passed a waste reduction act, which worked to some extent but not to the full extent that it was intended to. People are doing great with respect to household recycling, green boxes, blue boxes, grey boxes etc., but where we aren't doing so well is with respect to industrial and commercial waste. As a matter of fact, only about 12% of the waste that's created that way is being recycled right now.

The essence of this bill is to allow the government to take much greater control of our waste reduction processes in the province of Ontario. What the bill really says in its very essence is that when you, the producer or manufacturer, make an item and that item has outlived its usefulness, then you have to pay for the proper dispos-

ition or reuse of that item, or put it into new material so that other products can be created.

We simply cannot go on by just opening dumps all over this province like we have for the last 150 years. We now call them landfill sites or we give them some other environmental name etc., but at the end of the day, we are putting stuff in landfills that is polluting our land, polluting our waterways, and the ultimate cost of getting rid of the pollution and the toxic material that's in these landfill sites is going to be megatons more than the amount of money for which we can do it right in the first place.

So we're saying to the producers, "You're responsible for the ultimate disposal of this item in the same way that you're responsible for the cost of material and labour in that product." That's what this bill is all about. That's the way to go. That's the way the modern world, the western world, is going out there, and we should join that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I was listening intently to the member from Newmarket–Aurora. When he started, the phrase I think he used was "trick-or-treat," and that's very appropriate for Bill 91, because it's more trick than treat. There's no question about it.

Not to be playing fun on words, but he also used the reference of supersizing. I've heard from—for instance, I have one here. This is from the president and COO of Sony Canada, Mr. Doug Wilson. He's totally opposed to the bill. The industry itself—if they'd only work with them—made a suggestion here of the EPRA, which is the Electronic Products Recycling Association.

I can tell you this, with the bill itself, the trick part of it is this: They're not cancelling any of the fees, and they're outsourcing any responsibility. The fact is, the eco fees are not going away; they're increasing. I think the member from Newmarket–Aurora said that. But here's the trick: They're actually buried in the price now. For a government that talks continuously about accountability, now they're hiding the tax. Today it shows on your receipt at the cash register, that you're paying so much for batteries, chlorine, tires, whatever it is. It's shameful, actually. Now you won't be able to find out what you're paying; it's going to be buried in the price.

They're not doing a single thing in this bill. It's tragic. The member who just spoke in response to the member from—Mr. Klees, I mean—he was at one time the minister. I remember the day he did a press conference on the eco fees and the whole conference went sideways on him. It was tragic. I'm not saying that—because he's a great, great guy. I like Mr. Gerretsen very much.

Here's the deal, though: It really is a shame. This bill is another example of the government hiding from the truth.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a treat to add to the comments of the member from Newmarket–Aurora. He's a veteran member in this Legislature, and I'm always

pleased when I have the opportunity to sit down in here and listen to his—I'll even go as far as saying "his wise words."

0920

But I feel your pain. I feel your pain when it comes to waste reduction, because maybe there's an amendment that we might put to this bill which is the wasted amount of time that you have not benefited from by maybe participating in this discussion about what we can accomplish.

I looked at your theme and I heard you as far as what the Conservative caucus perspective is in regard to a government-NDP coalition. Quite frankly, I just think it's an NDP government, who is in a third opposition, that's getting things accomplished here.

Under Bill 91, there's a theme: using the three Rs, which are reduce, reuse and recycle. Well, we've got our own three Rs that we've been using, and those are results, results and results. We've been doing what we're supposed to do.

My good friend here, my good friend from Essex, a very proud member, a very good working member from Essex—and I have my other colleagues who are here with me this morning. We practise those three Rs. We go out and we actually get and achieve results for our communities.

But I've got to get back to you, to Bill 91, and the treat of following my esteemed colleague from Newmarket.

We've stalled on this initiative for the last 20 years; we haven't done anything. From my perspective, from my northern communities' perspective, we have a lot of communities that do want to participate but don't have the programs in place to participate. This will maybe give them an opportunity to participate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Interjection: No.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Oh, sorry. Two-minute response from the member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: In response to the member from Algoma–Manitoulin, I would suggest that we need a fourth R, and the fourth R would be recovery—recovery from the mess that this government has put us into, thanks to the support of the NDP.

I want to just say this: It's interesting how this government can take a good idea and bungle it through implementation. What we're concerned about is the massive bureaucracy that is being constructed under the guise of a good intention. This government could not find a file that it couldn't bungle up, so with something as well-intentioned as recycling, they've done it again, and it will be a multi-million-dollar, if not a billion-dollar, boondoggle.

Why did the government not take the proposal put forward more than a year ago by the PC caucus? That plan has, as a starting point, the scrapping of each and every eco fee foisted on the people of Ontario by this government. We would get rid of the out-of-control, costly bureaucracies that have been established by this govern-

ment and put control back into the Ministry of the Environment where it should be, where there is also accountability. We would treat recyclable material as a valuable resource and allow business to actually turn those recyclable materials into products that have a benefit.

This government couldn't get it right if we tried to show them how, because they wouldn't understand common sense. What I am saying to the people of Ontario is don't be fooled by the trick-or-treat on this Halloween day by this government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Good morning.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Good morning, my esteemed colleagues, and good morning to the member from Newmarket—Aurora. I will use a couple of brief moments at the beginning of my 10-minute hit here, just to address his comments.

I listened intently. I respect the member. He's tempered, and I think his ideas come well nuanced in everything that he says, so I certainly respect him. He is the quintessential Conservative, as I see it. You can rely on where he's coming from: lesser government—you heard that—smaller government or almost no government. He would like no government, I would imagine, no revenue stream to fund some of the most important social programs or policy programs that people want out there.

But I didn't hear, in his 10-minute speech, any reference to what the Conservatives would do to reduce the amount of waste that our regions and our communities are faced with, and that our municipalities are faced with, in terms of the increased cost. Not only did I not hear from him specifically, but I haven't seen anything in the dozen or so white papers they've put out that spoke about the three Rs: reduce, reuse and recycle.

I would say that the only way they do address some of the pressing problems in terms of waste reduction, or the three Rs, would be that they reuse old principles and old policies from the Mike Harris era, they recycle their talking points and they reduce any comprehensive dialogue—or any true public policy discussions that we should have—to absolutely the most basic, fundamental bottom line here: Throw your hands up and let the free market deal with it. Well, that hasn't worked, and I think this is what the bill attempts to do.

Of course, I'll speak a little bit about the mechanics of the bill. At the beginning, it sets diversion targets and enforceable standards for producers to meet. So it gives them benchmarks, it gives them goals, it gives them qualified targets. Anybody in business will tell you that what they want is certainty. They want to know that there is a certain policy and process to fulfill, to manage in their daily business activity.

One of the things we know is that this province has failed miserably when it comes to achieving its waste reduction targets, and the burden of that has typically

fallen on municipalities. We see it in each and every one of our regions, where landfill and tipping fees and waste management fees have really gone through the roof.

We know as well that the industry-funded Stewardship Ontario organization has been a failure in terms of its ability to address waste reduction targets and address the, I guess, producer responsibility aspect of waste reduction. By and large, that burden has again been left on consumers. We see it in eco fees. When you go and buy a television, you see that fee as a supplement to what the actual price tag would be. It's fair for consumers to say, "Well, what's happening here? Are we really achieving our targets?"

I don't think anyone would argue that people in our communities don't want to see landfills around their regions growing exponentially. We're a developed province and a developed nation. It's certain we can find the technological means and policy means to effectively deal with waste reduction.

What this bill aims to do, I guess, is remedy some of the failures within the Stewardship Ontario program. One of the main planks is that it does initiate somewhat of a producer-pay methodology, one that makes sense to me. The member from Newmarket—Aurora mentioned that once we lump the cost of waste reduction into the final price tag, those fees, those costs, will simply be passed on to the consumer. I would say it would be an abject failure by industry to not find the means, not find the incentive, to reduce their costs so that that price tag, on a competitive basis—that final bill you get, whether it would be on a television or a microwave or any other product that might be encompassed under the waste reduction targets—I think they would be hard pressed to do nothing about it.

You would think they could find mechanisms and efficiencies, and indeed that is the incentive. If they so choose, they won't have to pass the bulk of their costs on to consumers, in terms of hitting these targets; they can certainly find those efficiencies within their product, within their supply chain. And they are to be found, Mr. Speaker. I would say that one of the closest links we have to waste in this province is packaging—over-packaging.

Some days, when I buy something from a store, I feel it's like a Russian nesting doll. I've got to take the package out of the package to get to the package of the product that I finally want, and that final product is just a small little thing, but yet I've got a pound of packaging that comes along with it. You know, it seems simple economics that we can find a better way to distribute our goods and services to people of the province.

0930

Again, there are ways to address this encompassing other industries. I have a great friend in the Chatham-Kent area. His name is Joe Dama. Joe Dama has developed a process to supplement or to use soybeans to produce the little kernels that you see, the Styrofoam kernels that go inside of packaging. So, instead of seeing Styrofoam chips inside of a box, Joe Dama has developed a natural, organic process that fills that gap, that is bio-

degradable, that is cost-effective, that has triple net benefit when it encompasses other aspects of our economy, mainly agriculture. Yet he can't compete with the massive packaging companies that are able to certainly cut their costs on Styrofoam—I guess it wouldn't be cheaper.

But if we as a government were able to recognize that there are other areas, that there are ways that we can hit our targets and incentivize and stimulate our economy here, we should be doing that, and I think it is expected of us. It is our responsibility. We also know that waste reduction and resource conservation, as I had mentioned, is a huge economic sector, contributing over \$3.2 billion in revenue and 14,000 direct jobs in Ontario, but it could be much more. This bill, I think, is attempting to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I do not claim to be any expert on waste reduction. I would like to hear from experts, and that's why I think this bill should go to committee, because there's a lot of technical and policy information that I think we need to hear about. There are best practices around the world from jurisdictions that have gotten their waste reduction targets under hand, under wraps. I see no valid reason for us not to address this issue and attack this issue in earnest because, in fact, our communities are demanding it. Our municipalities are demanding it. We believe that it's good public policy. It can be effective and it can set the stage for generations to come in terms of doing it a different way and not simply the old way of waste. I think the time has come for us to actually put some effort into this and make it happen.

Again, this comes about because previous programs have failed. It was outlined by the Environmental Commissioner, who stated quite clearly that we are not reducing our targets. And Ontario has the worst record; this province has the worst record in Confederation. So, you know, it's our responsibility, as the worst province when it comes to waste reduction targets and meeting them, to do something about it.

For the members of the Conservative caucus to simply throw up their hands I guess is indicative of the way that they've addressed other legislation in this building, without putting any effort into it and any real, tangible, comprehensive policy. I expect that from them, but I'm going to take my job seriously in this House and do my due diligence on this bill, work it through, and actually deliver good public policy and results for the people of Ontario. They expect nothing less.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I want to thank the member for Essex for what he has said. It's very close to what this bill is trying to do. I agree with him. We should get this bill into committee, where we can hear from the industry, hear from various experts and improve the bill. It's the right direction to go in.

Producer responsibility: I think the third party and ourselves agree that that's where the responsibility should be. We know that when dealing with this and when dealing with these products when they're no longer useful to the consumer—that dollar can be shown very clearly as

another of the costs that the retailer has for that product. It's very important that we do this. I think enough people here have said that the existing system is not working.

This is from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and I think we have to listen: "The Legislature is currently debating if Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, will move beyond second reading. It reflects municipal perspectives on producers' responsibility for their products and packages. It would offer relief to property taxpayers by providing more industry funding for waste diversion."

I have something here from the city of Ottawa. It's from the mayor but it includes the thoughts of Maria McRae, and the chair of the planning committee, Peter Hume, who is eagerly following this, following his long record with AMO: "I understand that Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, is scheduled for further debate at second reading this week. Copied on this email are the chair ... Maria McRae, and the chair of our planning committee, Peter Hume...."

"I am writing to encourage your support of Bill 91, at the very least to move it to committee, as it is something that is important to municipalities across Ontario, including the city of Ottawa. I believe there have been seven or eight days of debate at second reading and there can be virtually nothing left to say 'on principle.' It should now move on to committee for in-depth review."

I like this letter from the mayor. I think that's what we should do: We should vote on this legislation and get it into committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like the opportunity to quickly introduce a few visitors who are here today in our members' gallery: Shelagh Kerr, from Electronics Product Stewardship Canada, and Rob Cook and Peter Hargreave from the OWWA. I know they're listening intently to this debate, as I was this morning from my office.

I couldn't help but come down and add my two minutes to the debate, after listening to the Attorney General speak, because we all know that he and the former Premier were really the godfathers of the eco tax scheme here in Ontario. He actually had the opportunity to introduce true reform when he was the environment minister. But what did he do? He worked to create hundreds of millions of dollars in eco taxes with the godfather of eco tax himself, the then Premier, Dalton McGuinty, in a rush to nickel and dime Ontario consumers. The now Attorney General and the Liberals spent five years constructing elaborate eco taxation schemes for just 3% of the waste stream—that's right, just 3%. That means Ontarians are paying hundreds of millions of dollars each and every year to recycle just a fraction of Ontario's total waste stream.

What I find truly tragic is that the Liberals ignored the largest part of the waste stream, that of the ICI, or the industrial, commercial and institutional sector. In fact, the ICI sector makes up 60% of the total waste stream, yet the Liberals have ignored it for the last 10 years.

Speaker, I know you want to know a little bit more about what was going on behind the scenes, so I couldn't help but pull out an old Toronto Star article by Robert Benzie. It reads: "McGuinity Led Eco Fee Push Over Cabinet Objections." It goes on to talk about a senior minister who led the charge but warned the Premier that the policy could spark a backlash. Well, that's an understatement, perhaps, in July 2010, and I'm sure I'll have more opportunity to bring this article to light in the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's a pleasure to be able to stand in this House and add my comments on the Waste Reduction Act and follow up on my colleague from Essex.

I think, for those people involved in this debate—and I speak more to the people like the people in the gallery and the people who are really intently involved, the stewards, the municipalities—it's a very, very important debate.

The member from Essex talked about packaging. You know, we do have too much packaging, but in some cases the stewards can't control that. It's an issue.

The municipalities and the stewards are worried. Let's put it in simple language: The stewards are worried because they feel the municipalities have the control but they have to foot the bill.

There are pretty basic things we're talking about here. I think one thing that we're all worried about, given some of the past experiences with this government, is the waste management authority because, although it sounds very authoritative, it will conceivably be another authority like Ornge. That's what we're all worried about.

0940

But our goal here—where we are isn't good at all. Let's move this bill to committee and try to make the best of it, because we can make a lot of changes in this bill that will make it better. Let's understand where the problems are, and let's try to work to actually improve what we have.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: The toughest job in this House is to be the critic for the environment in the Tory party. There is no tougher job, because let's face it: They basically don't care about the environment.

The other thing that I have absolutely no use for are personal attacks. I'll tell you what happened four or five years ago when I was environment minister: We were undermined by a significant sector of the manufacturing and retail industry. Items that they darned well knew should have cost a penny more for the so-called eco fee all of a sudden were sold in stores for a dollar more. They did not like the scheme in which we wanted to make the producers responsible to keep toxic materials out of our landfill sites. That's what it was all about.

They didn't like the government's plan, and a majority—not everybody, not all the retailers out there, but

there were a significant number of retailers that had been well in the know, because they had been consulted six or seven months before that as to what we intended to implement on July 1, and some of them, purposely, as far as I'm concerned, undermined the system by charging a dollar on a tube that cost nine bucks when they darned well knew that what the fee structure set out was a penny.

What we're trying to do in this bill is to make the government more responsible and more accountable, and also give them greater control over the whole recycling and reduction of waste issue.

The bottom line is this: We cannot keep continuing to put toxic materials in our landfills or our waterways. The cost of cleaning that up in the long run is mega, mega times more than to do it right in the first place.

Mr. Michael Harris: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order from the member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, quickly: For the Liberals, it's not about protecting the environment; it's all about the money.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That's not a point of order.

The member for Essex, you have two minutes.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thanks to the members from Ottawa—Orléans, Kitchener—Conestoga, Timiskaming—Cochrane and the Attorney General.

I have two small kids; my son is six and my daughter is nine. I envision, I look forward to a day, 20 or 30 years from now, when we set a target and there is zero waste, when they can walk on a beach and not see a plastic container or a hypodermic needle or a six-pack container. I look forward to a day when they can take a walk in a park and not see refuse thrown randomly. I look forward to a time when they can buy a product at a store and know that there is some environmental responsibility there. It's incumbent upon us to do that.

To stand here and listen to the PC caucus throw their hands up, absolutely take no responsibility, placate industry, backstop industry, protect industry and not indicate that they have any responsibility to protect the environment—it's an abject failure on their part. It shows that they're too out of touch with 21st-century thinking and our responsibility as members of this Legislature to actually do something.

If they want to stand and defend primary producers of goods, that's fine. But sometimes you've got to make tough decisions. Sometimes you've got to actually bring people to the table and say, "The process is wrong. Let's come together and fix this, and let's do it so it has a triple or quadruple net benefit for the people of our province." That's what our job is.

You can stick to your speaking points and the message wheel, as the member from Newmarket—Aurora did, but it doesn't help the conversation, and it abdicates our responsibility here in the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity this morning to rise in the House and speak on behalf of the people of Wellington-Halton Hills to this Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act. It has been said, of course, given the date today—Halloween—that this bill is more Liberal trick than treat.

I first of all want to express my appreciation to the Ontario egg farmers, who served us breakfast this morning. I know many of the members were there, and we all enjoyed our time with the egg producers of Ontario, an important agriculture group in our province. They do a great job on behalf of their members. We're obviously delighted when they come once a year to update us on the issues, and we were very fortunate to have a delicious breakfast in the members' dining room.

Now, Mr. Speaker, someone tuning in to watch this session of the Legislature this morning might think that we'd be talking about jobs and the economy. They might think we'd be talking about the gas plant scandal, where \$1.1 billion of taxpayers' and ratepayers' money was wasted on a shameless Liberal plan to eliminate two gas plants to save a small number of Liberal seats—nervous Liberal members who were afraid of the electorate in their ridings. They might think that we'd be talking about the deficit and the debt. Of course, as you know, Mr. Speaker, the provincial debt is going from \$253 billion to \$273 billion this year alone, and the debt has doubled under this Liberal government over the last 10 years. The deficit is unacceptably high, notwithstanding the government's claims that they've actually reduced it somewhat with their accounting tricks.

They might think that we'd be talking about agriculture and small business, with of course this month of October being Small Business Month in the province of Ontario. We celebrate their achievements; we know and understand how important agriculture is. People would expect us to be talking about that.

People would expect us to be talking about infrastructure needs. Of course, as you know, Mr. Speaker, there are a significant number of infrastructure needs in all of our ridings in the province. I have a whole list of things that need provincial government partnership to support.

They might expect us to be talking about research and innovation, that important field of the government's responsibility, and I'm pleased that the Minister of Research and Innovation is in the House today. The fact is, research and innovation represents the future opportunities in our economy and in our health care system and in many sectors, and it should be a greater focus of the provincial government.

They might expect that we would be talking about how we're going to work together with the other orders of government to ensure that decisions are made in the public interest and that we're working together and not just pointing fingers.

However, we are talking about another important issue, which is Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act. I want to express my appreciation and congratulations, really, to our critic for the Ministry of the Environment, Michael

Harris, who is the member for Kitchener-Conestoga. I was privileged to represent the riding of Waterloo-Wellington from 1999 to 2007, and when redistribution created a new riding of Kitchener-Conestoga, much of my old riding went into that riding. I think Michael Harris, the member for Kitchener-Conestoga, has done an outstanding job representing the constituents that I was privileged to represent for those years. He has really gotten into this responsibility in the Legislature and jumped in with both feet and hit the ground running, to mix my metaphors. Certainly, he has done an outstanding job as minister—as critic to the Minister of the Environment, and possibly a future Minister of the Environment, if the Progressive Conservatives are privileged to form the government in the future.

Let's get to the bill. This Waste Reduction Act would repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002, yet it would continue every recycling program, agency and fee created under the old act. That bill, the Waste Diversion Act, was a bill that was passed by the Progressive Conservative government of Ernie Eves, I think, in 2002, and we've been living under it for the last 10 years. I wouldn't say that it was perfect; I wouldn't say that anything is perfect in government. Over time, these things need to be evaluated and reviewed. But certainly we don't see Bill 91 as the solution to the problems that are out there today.

We also know that Bill 91 would give the Minister of the Environment the power to designate new materials and classes of materials for recycling and service standards, which must be established by cabinet through regulation. We say that one would assume that these standards would refer to recycling targets and accessibility to collection sites.

We know that Bill 91 would give the government the opportunity to require, through regulation, that producers meet these yet-to-be-determined standards for designated materials. Under the bill, the producers would include manufacturers, importers and brand owners, as well as e-tailers, as they're called, which is mentioned only in the accompanying Waste Reduction Strategy. So, for example, companies such as Canadian Tire, Coca-Cola, Goodyear tires, Panasonic, Samsung, Target, Tim Hortons and Walmart would all be considered to be producers.

0950

We know that Bill 91, as it stands now, continues Waste Diversion Ontario and gives this unaccountable organization enforcement powers, a bigger multi-million-dollar budget and a new name, the Waste Reduction Authority. Similar to the College of Trades, this authority would have the power to set and collect fees or taxes to fund its operations, and we know that this regulatory agency would be headed up by a registrar, or what we call a "waste czar," whose job it would be to register producers in the authority's registry. The registrar would then appoint deputies to help seek out producers who would be forced to pay a tax to fund the operation of the authority. This tax, of course, would then be passed on to consumers as an eco tax. The registrar would then

assemble an army of inspectors—or waste cops, as our critic has called them—to fan out across the province, looking for violators to fine for not meeting its standards. The revenue generated from these fines would then be funneled back into the authority.

The authority would also be in charge of resolving disputes between municipalities, who would collect recyclable materials, and producers, who are financially responsible for recycling these materials. The strategy states: “The Waste Reduction Authority will need to acquire the human resources skills and expertise necessary to perform this important function.”

We also know that the authority is disconnected from the Legislature, and it is not subject to the freedom-of-information act and can only be reviewed by the Auditor General if the minister feels it’s necessary. We believe that’s a significant weakness in the bill, and it doesn’t provide the necessary accountability that should be built into it.

We also say that the Liberals claim that their bill holds individual producers responsible for recycling. These businesses may join an intermediary, which we call cartels, which would also be required to register with the authority. This cartel would then be required to follow the recycling and service standards established by the minister and would be fined if found in violation.

We know that right now under the Waste Diversion Act in the province of Ontario, municipalities and producers split the cost of the Blue Box Program about 50-50. Bill 91 creates a new framework that the government could use to increase the amount industry must pay for this recycling program; however, this transition would, again, be left to regulation. If the minister chooses to proceed, there are three ways to establish the amount the authority pays: municipalities and industry can strike an agreement; the authority can create a funding formula; or cabinet can set the amount. Obviously, this represents some concerns for industry, which could be strong-armed into paying more.

Our caucus has been clear on this bill. We say that the Waste Reduction Act is a Liberal shell game or, as I said earlier, a Liberal trick more so than a treat that shifts eco taxes from consumers’ receipts to price tags on store shelves. This bill not only fails to meet the Ontario PC Party’s demand to scrap eco taxes, but it also fails to eliminate the Liberals’ recycling cartels and the government’s unaccountable oversight agency Waste Diversion Ontario.

We have a better plan. We suggest that the Waste Reduction Act fails to meet the Ontario PC Party’s two biggest demands: that they scrap eco taxes and eliminate the useless bureaucracy. That’s why we can’t support this Bill 91. In November of last year, the Ontario PC Party presented a better way forward to protect our environment, to lower costs for businesses and to treat recyclable materials not as waste but as valuable resources that could be recovered and recycled into new products. The Ontario PC Party would scrap eco taxes, get rid of Liberal recycling cartels and return all oversight back to the

Ministry of the Environment where it truly and justly belongs. Under our plan, government would set measurable and achievable recycling targets, establish environmental standards and measure outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important debate about the environment, and there are a number of environmental issues that are of concern to my constituents in Wellington-Halton Hills. I have been meeting with residents of the town of Erin, and they are very concerned about unregulated fill being brought into their community and dumped on farmland. I have raised this issue on a number of occasions with the Minister of the Environment, and I know the member for Durham has expressed his concerns as well, as it affects his constituents.

Going back to February 13, 2012, I wrote to the Minister of the Environment asking that an inter-ministerial committee be established to establish a provincial policy for the effective regulation of the dumping of fill. I would suggest that all the relevant ministries should be involved: the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministries of Agriculture and Food, Finance, Municipal Affairs and Housing, Natural Resources, Transportation and perhaps others. I know that the minister is aware of this issue because I have discussed it with him. He has responded to me in writing indicating that they have a guide for best management practices for soil management, and they look to municipalities to establish proper bylaws, but at the same time, we believe that these best practice guidelines do not have the force of law, and greater steps need to be taken on this issue to ensure that the fill that is going into our communities is safe and that the groundwater is not going to be polluted and property values are going to be respected.

I also would suggest that there’s a big environmental problem in the community of Morriston, south of Guelph, an air pollution issue, because of traffic jams resulting from the bottleneck on Highway 6. The Morriston bypass project that I have put forward as a private members’ resolution, which is the first resolution on the order paper today—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was rather interesting listening to the members. You can really see the Conservatives’ train of thought that if we trust the industry and we give them standards, somehow they will comply.

How I wish they were right. How I wish that over the 20 years where we have set standards, where we have told the industry, where the entire planet has been shouting out that we want the three Rs and we’re not happy with what’s happening—the industry has not lived up to their end of the bargain.

Why is the government setting up new laws? It’s because when we left it up to the industry to do their corporate responsibility as a corporate citizen and participate in the recycling, reducing and reusing, they failed us. We wouldn’t be here today debating a new bill if the industry had stepped up to the plate and said, “We understand the environmental damage that some of those products are

doing. We're going to be a good corporate citizen and we're going to do what's best for the environment, for the people, for our air, for our water, for our ground." But for the last 20 years that the industry has spoken those words, they have not delivered.

So we stand here today debating Bill 91, which is far from perfect, as far as the NDP is concerned. I'm way more interested in zero waste than I'm interested in debating Bill 91. But we are here today because, for the last 20 years, the industry has not been a good corporate citizen when it came to recycling the material that they use, the material that they overproduce.

Am I happy with the turn of affairs? Absolutely not. Do I think that I want to trust the industry for another 20 years? Absolutely not.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I have a lot of respect for the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, a lot of respect, so I couldn't believe that he was following the script that was written, from the Conservatives.

Like my colleague the member from Nickel Belt, we have been waiting for the industry to be more responsible. We have been waiting for them.

Years ago, when I was going to buy new tires, I bought new tires and I had to pay extra because of the disposal of my old ones, not knowing that I was paying for my old ones to go into the garbage—le site d'enfouissement.

When you trust the industry to monitor themselves, it's not working. That's why, on this side of the House—and I'm also glad that the third party is in line with us. The bill may not be perfect. Let's move it to committee and improve it.

I applaud the comments from the member from Essex. Yes, what do we want to leave behind to our children? You know who are the best ones to make the people from my generation more conscious about the environment? The kids; the kids are telling you, "Don't put that in the garbage. Let's recycle it."

We need to take advice but not from that party, because they don't want any rules. "Let it go in the garbage, and you, the consumer, you're not paying anything"—that's not true, because you're paying through your taxes. You're paying three, four, five times what you should pay if there are rules and regulations around recycling.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It was a real pleasure to listen to the member from Wellington—Halton Hills. I know just how effectively he has represented his riding for over 20 years. He's been here, and he's seen what the NDP did and what the Liberals have done. In fact, I can't believe it: The fees that they brought in on agricultural tires were absolutely disgusting, a 200%, 300% increase.

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Here's what this bill does, and this is what the people of Ontario should know. First of all, you heard, from both

of the people who talked from the NDP and the Liberals, that they don't trust business, even small business—the father-knows-best attitude that is so pathetic, technically. They've had 10 years. Ask yourself: Is it any better in Ontario? Just ask yourself.

The waste, just in the gas plants alone: a billion dollars that could have gone to children's mental health and other programs.

They have no respect for the taxpayer. They have no respect for business. It's tragic, quite honestly.

There's a word that's missing in their vocabulary, which I think the member from Wellington—Halton Hills said in his thing—it's the "recover" component. The industry has put forward ideas. I spoke this morning to Shelagh Kerr, one of the people with Electronics Product Stewardship Canada, who's here listening, and other people from the industry side who are listening. They want the authority to do the right thing, not to be taxed.

Here's what this government is doing. They're hiding the eco fee in the price. You'll no longer know how much revenue you're collecting from those products for the end management of the product packaging etc., and it's just a tax grab. That's all it really is, a tax grab by this government.

It's just pathetic, what they've done to Ontario. We're paying more taxes and we have less health care. We're paying more for everything, and we have less of energy and everything else in Ontario. It's sad, and this member—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to say that I've been involved in heavy industry most of my life, and the by-products of heavy industry are very damaging to the environment, and can be—in recent years, we've moved in a direction where we're trying to recycle some of these things, but my big thing here is innovation and research. We have to come up with better and better things to get rid of this waste.

The bottom line is, we could start right here in downtown Toronto. The building I live in and rent doesn't recycle. Everything from all those floors goes into one bin, and this is all over Toronto's downtown. If you don't start in your own backyard to clean up the mess, where are you going to start? I thought that Toronto would be miles ahead of the rest of the province. Hamilton does a better job at recycling than downtown Toronto does. It's bad. They've got to do something about it.

If you look at the expansion into the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors of our province, the recycling rate is only at 13%. I would like to see this up to a minimum of 50%, between 50% and 75%, in the next five years, in recycling. Why? Because we're leaving a big mess for our grandchildren and their children. It's going to get to a point—we all know, with global warming and the things that are going on on our planet, that if we don't do something heavy-duty with the help of municipalities, with provincial, federal and all of North America, our lovely planet is in big trouble.

I want to see things done faster. I want innovation to move ahead. We need to save this planet for our future generations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Wellington–Halton Hills, you have two minutes.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm glad to respond to the member for Nickel Belt, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the member for Durham and the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. I thank the New Democrats for their comments and I think that, obviously, they are sincerely put and they believe in their ideas and their principles. But as the member for Durham indicated, it seems that the Liberals and the New Democrats, together, do not trust business.

Last night I had the opportunity to attend the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce Business Achievement Awards, where we celebrated the business community. Again, this is the month of October, this is Small Business Month, and I think that we can look to our business community for solutions. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke suggested to me just a minute ago, of course, and reminded us that business responds to consumers, and that is absolutely true. The late management theorist Peter Drucker said that business exists to serve a customer, and the fact is that businesses will respond to customer demands in a competitive market economy. That's a good thing. I think we have to look at it from that perspective as well.

The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services: I want to say that I certainly appreciate the work that she does here, and I want to thank her as well for her work to assist us in achieving the community safety zone for the community of Morriston, south of Guelph, a few weeks ago. We unveiled the signs. Of course, that's part of the solution to the environmental problem that exists in Morriston because of air quality, the challenges we're facing because of the traffic jams, where we need to build the Morriston bypass, the Highway 6 bypass, around the community of Morriston. I continue to raise that issue and ask the government to put it on its five-year plan for future construction. It is, as I said earlier, the number one resolution on the order paper right now, and I would continue to call attention to it and urge the provincial—

Mr. Rob Leone: I support it.

Mr. Ted Arnott: The member for Cambridge has written and expressed support for the Morriston bypass. I thank him for that as well, because I think it's an important issue for the entire part of the province. The bottleneck happens to be in my riding, but it affects the whole province in terms of the movement of goods and traffic.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M^{me} France G  linas: Happy Halloween, everybody.

Well, we are here today debating Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, and frankly, I wish we were not. I wish that during the last 20 years, Ontario had not fallen to the bottom of the heap when it comes to waste reduction. I

wish that during the last 20 years, when people clued in that the environment had a direct effect on our health, on the survival of our species, that things would have been done.

But all is not bleak. Many things were done. Wonderful programs were put into place, the blue box programs and the grey box, where individual households started to sort out their garbage and started to put everything that could be composted into a green box, and everything that could be recycled. Then the Blue Box Program expanded and we could put more and more of our waste in there. And it worked: Families really participate well in this, no matter where you live in Ontario. If the program is available, they do.

But there are some outliers in there that are not holding up their end of the bargain, and that is why we are standing here today. It's called the ICI. I didn't know what it stands for. It stands for "institutional, commercial and industrial sector."

Institutional: Think long-term-care homes, hospitals, prisons, any institutions. Commercial is pretty easy too: anything from the pizza shop to the tailor shop. Industrial: Whether you think about a steel town or you think about a mining town anywhere, they produce a lot of waste. All of them together, over the 20 years where we have set targets after targets of what we wanted them to reduce, reuse and recycle—waste reduction—they have failed us. Altogether, this sector, after years and years and years of telling us that they were getting better and they were on it and they understand the importance of recycling and reducing, they're at 13%.

The goal back in 2004, almost 10 years ago now, was that we were to be at 60% in 2008. The industry and the commercial and all of this, they promised, "Yes, we can do this. We don't need legislation. We are good corporate citizens, and we will deliver on our own." The target was 60%; the target was 2008. We're at 2013, and we are at 13%. Would you call that a success? I don't. I don't.

I come from a heavy industrial environment. I come from a mining town where what comes out of those processing plants, whether you talk about the tailings or whether you talk about the smelter or about the mills, has a profound, unhealthy effect on humans, on animals, on our environment and all of this. There are environmental guidelines specifically for the mines.

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When it comes to waste, we trust the industry will do the right thing because it is the right thing to do. Man, I wish they would have delivered. I wish that in 2004, when we set that target of 60% by 2008, they would have done what we all know was the right thing to do. But we are in 2013 and we have missed deadline after deadline. We now have a record of failures, nothing to be proud of, nothing to be bragging about, and here we are saying that we will now move forward with the full cost of goods.

I come from northern Ontario. When I buy a product, I pay the same price that you guys pay down south, although it may be down in Essex someplace or in the States or whatever. When they advertise a sale price of a

television for \$399 at Future Shop, I pay the same price in Sudbury that you guys do down south. Does anybody think that the transportation cost to bring stuff to Thunder Bay—the member from Thunder Bay is here—or to bring stuff to Sudbury is not taken into account in the price of the goods? Some people will say, “Oh, this is an extra tax on buying a television.” No, it is not. It is part of doing business. If you’re going to bring your products to market in northern Ontario, you take into account the fact that you’re going to have to pay to transport those goods to wherever you want to sell them.

Industry has adapted to this. We are asking them to take the next step. That’s all we are asking them to do. We are not putting a new tax on; we are asking them to be responsible for what they do. So not only do they pay for the goods, to assemble whatever it is that they want to sell, pay for the labour for the good people who put it together, pay for the transportation costs, pay for the packaging, for getting it safely to market; we also want them to pay for the disposal of whatever it is they put together. To me, it couldn’t be further away from a tax. It is the price of doing business.

Now that we know what waste costs us, now that we know that there is a real human and financial cost associated with waste, when you do a product, not only will you pay for it to be assembled and the staff to put it together and the packaging to be able to move it and the gas to be able to ship it, you will also pay into the price of your goods to have it disposed of. This is the price of doing business.

Will it drive innovation? Absolutely, because now that they will have to take into account the price of disposing of the goods before they actually sell them to me and you and everybody else, I’m sure some very intelligent people will put their bright minds together and start to look at ways to decrease those costs so that they can bring their products to market at a cheaper cost so that they sell more—like they did with transportation, like they did with automation, like they did with everything else.

I can tell you—and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines is here in the House this morning—that when a new mine is put together, they have to pay ahead of time for what it will cost to clean up the site. For years and years and years, they didn’t have to do this. A new mine would open up, and then the good people of Nickel Belt were stuck with billions of dollars of cleanup of mining companies that merged, that failed, that disappeared, but the mess stayed behind.

We learned from that. Now, if you are going to open up a new mine in Ontario, you are going to pay upfront and tell us exactly how you are going to go about cleaning it up and—

Hon. Michael Gravelle: A mine closure plan.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The mine closure plan. Thank you, Minister.

So the mining is a very viable industrial part of our economy, and they take full cost of their production. Not only do they pay for the exploration, but they pay for the closure plan ahead of time, so that the good people who

live there are not stuck with a mess when they leave the place.

The same principle will now apply to other parts of our economy. That’s all we’re doing. We’re saying that when you bring your products to market, you will have to take into account the value of the goods to put it together—the value of the staff, the automation, the packaging, the transportation—and of disposal. That’s all.

When people want to label this as a tax—I realize this is a dividing issue, and in here we like to fight and divide, but that’s not what this bill is about. This bill is about making sure that the full cost of goods is included in the price you pay, so that the price to dispose of them—it’s like what mining companies do when they open a mine. They pay the price to dispose, and to rehabilitate the site to its original state. It’s included in the price. That’s all that this bill is about to do. Could it be doing more? Yes. I want to talk about zero waste. We’re not talking about that at all. We’re talking about bringing goods to market—that are responsible for their full cost. That’s all.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House now stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: It’s my pleasure to welcome the members of the 1st Ingersoll Girl Guides to Queen’s Park today. They are Ara Sackrider, Kaytlin Matthews, Julia Widmer-Bailey, Nikole Daltrey, Kelly Byers, Nancy Matthews, Stacey Hanlon and Amy Boddy.

Last year, while on a group trip, their cabin was filled with carbon monoxide. Luckily, they inspected the detector beforehand and no one was hurt. They are now here to support my private member’s bill this afternoon that we will be debating. I commend them for being prepared and welcome them to Queen’s Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That was a nice introduction.

Hon. Michael Chan: I would like to introduce two of my constituent assistants. They are Jessie Huang and Roderick Tom-Ying. They are part of a very hard-working team that proudly serves the people of Markham–Unionville. Jessie and Roderick, welcome to Queen’s Park.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I know this guest was introduced earlier by my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga, but it’s my pleasure to introduce Shelagh Kerr, visiting the Legislature today. Shelagh is from the Coalition for Effective Waste Reduction in Ontario.

Mr. John Vanthof: I’d like to welcome the people from Egg Farmers of Ontario here this morning. We had a very great breakfast courtesy of them. I’d especially like to welcome two very close friends, Donna Lange and Bill Mitchell.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I’d also like to welcome the egg producers of Ontario this morning, particularly Scott Craw-

ford, Harry Pelissero and Vance Drain from my riding of Peterborough. All members had a very egg-citing time this morning.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'd like to welcome my very dear friend Derrick Tuyl and his beautiful daughter Karlee, who is here today with the John Knox Christian School. She made me this beautiful bracelet this morning. We'd like to welcome all of them today.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: On behalf of Etobicoke North, I would like to acknowledge Mr. and Mrs. Patel and brother Prey Patel, and Mr. and Mrs. Hull. Mr. and Mrs. Hull are teachers of Anal Patel, one of the legislative pages. Welcome to the Legislature and enjoy this morning's session.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a pleasure to welcome to the House today Brian Miller. He's the provincial director for the Egg Farmers of Ontario. He does a wonderful job representing my riding of Huron-Bruce.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: We're joined in the west public gallery and the east public gallery by 81 students from the John Knox Christian School in Oakville. Please welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today Scott Helps from the Egg Farmers of Ontario, a district director from the county of Lambton representing Sarnia-Lambton.

M. Taras Natyshak: Ça me donne plaisir d'introduire à l'Assemblée aujourd'hui M. Gérard Malo, qui est l'ex-directeur national des affaires francophones de la Guilde canadienne des médias et aussi un journaliste de la CBC à la retraite. Bienvenue, monsieur Malo.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I too want to thank the Egg Farmers of Ontario for the lovely breakfast we got this morning, and to introduce Dan Veldman, who represents the great riding of Oxford.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions?

With us, in the Speaker's gallery today, we have a delegation from the federal Parliament of the Republic of Kenya, led by Senator David Musila. They are accompanied today by Her Excellency Ms. Lily Sambu, Minister Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Kenya to Canada. Welcome to our delegation.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: I guess, Speaker, I'll ask a question to the House leader today. I will say as I lead off, I want to talk about the fall economic statement next Thursday. I will say to the House leader that I do feel let down; I guess it's partially my own fault. When I met with Premier Wynne over a number of bills, including Bill 74, she said she'd support it. She did. Then she abstained. Then she voted against it, or fled. I guess the next time I want to cut a deal with the Liberals, I'll just go directly to

Pat Dillon and find out how you're going to vote. That's what I'm going to do.

As you are House leader, you'll be deciding what legislation comes forward. You'll consult with Pat Dillon and the Working Families Coalition, I guess.

But let me ask you this: In the fall economic statement, you've been given a heads-up. Will we actually see some bold ideas to get spending under control, or are we going to see a lot more Liberal fluff?

Hon. John Milloy: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the interest the third party now has and what it is that Ontario will be doing going forward for the long term.

Our fall economic statement is going to talk about how we're going to continue to invest in our people, what we're going to do to continue investing strategically in infrastructure so that we build and create more jobs—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm hearing the noises from both sides while a question is being put and an answer is being put. It stops.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker—and of course, how we're going to continue to maintain a very dynamic business climate to encourage that investment. This is what's important for Ontario—not only for Ontario but for Canada. We're doing a number of initiatives in this fall economic statement which I'll address in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I don't know how to respond to that. Respectfully, Finance Minister, every day I'm asking you questions or the Premier about jobs and the economy, getting spending under control. I've asked probably a dozen questions about the economic statement. I've not had answers yet, so let me give it a try, to you.

As I pointed out yesterday, we passed the four-year anniversary of Ontario's credit downgrade. Next week we'll hit the fifth anniversary of Ontario becoming a have-not province, all under the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals. We have 300,000 lost manufacturing jobs and almost a million people who want to work who can't in the province of Ontario. Quite frankly, we helped clear the decks so you could put a plan forward, but all I've seen since that time is legislation on restaurant menus and 24/7 dispatch for pets, when you can't even run Ornge air ambulance for human beings in the province of Ontario.

Minister, with all due respect, enough of the fluff, enough of the clutter: Are we actually going to see a plan come Thursday to put Ontario back—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do not get quiet for somebody to poke—carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, smiled and smirked at the hard work that Ontarians have been

doing over these last many years, including the work that we've done on this side of the House without their support. That includes reducing spending on a per capita basis on this side. As a government, we are the lowest-cost government anywhere in Canada as a result of the work that we've done. For four years in a row, we've controlled our spending at less than 1% growth year over year. Last year, as audited by the Auditor General, our spending actually went down, and that's the first time in over a decade.

But apart from all the control measures that we've put in place, it's the stimulus and the strategic investments that we're making to support our economy that has mattered, and that has created more than 475,000 net new jobs since the recession.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, I guess Thursday will be a watershed moment. We'll see if the finance minister acts like a finance minister or just a parrot from tired, old talking points.

1040

I mean, truth be told, Finance Minister, you can torture statistics and get them to confess to anything, but the reality is there are a lot of people who are out of work in the province of Ontario. There are a lot of people who are losing hope in this great province, and they're losing hope in you because, quite frankly, they don't trust a word you say anymore.

What's frustrating too is why the third party, the NDP, see their role to be the defense attorneys for the Liberals, as apologists for the Liberals, whenever you have to get off the hook. I know why you put the fluff forward: because they'll support it. They'll keep this plan going. They'll bail you out no matter what you do.

I'm saying enough is enough—enough with your fluff, enough with the baubles and trinkets. I want to see a real plan. I want to see Ontario working again, and if you're not going to do it, we're prepared to do the job for you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs will come to order.

Answer, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Talk about fluff. The opposition has no plan, and the only plan that they have put forward is one of destruction, and it's going to harm our economic recovery.

The members opposite should stand in this House and support our employer health tax program to help small business. It's being stalled by that side of the House. We need to pass that now to support those small businesses. Sixty thousand more small businesses would be exempt from paying that tax. They're holding it up. They should be supporting businesses and supporting all those families that are working hard.

We're taking leadership. We're supporting them by way of pension reform. We're introducing new forms of raising capital so when we renew our capital and our debt, we're doing it at better rates. They're stalling us. They should stand up for Ontario.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Today, the committee investigating the gas plants scandal was cancelled. The Premier is refusing to be called as a witness to respond to the Auditor General's report, and as consistently reported by the CP this week, the Premier is holding off-site press conferences during question period so journalists can't cover both. That pattern of behaviour reflects something very seriously wrong with her leadership. It shows she is hiding something. She would make Rose Mary Woods, President Nixon's secretary, blush by her behaviour.

Will the minister explain why the Premier continues to put obstacles in our place and why she told the House and committee that the cancellation would only be \$33 million to \$40 million when she knew over two years ago it would be well over \$700 million?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Although I'd like the opportunity to answer that question, I'm referring it to the government House leader.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The convention is simply to move it to another minister and that's all.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the member is simply wrong. The Premier has not refused to appear in front of committee. She has indicated to the committee that her office will work with the committee to find a date in the coming weeks. I would remind that when the Leader of the Opposition was called in front of the committee, it took three tries before he went in front of the committee.

I would also point out, in terms of—if they want to talk about timing, why will they not allow their candidates to come before the committee to talk about the spending analysis that was done by the Conservative Party before it made the very aggressive promise in the last election to cancel these plants, to talk about the type of work that was done by the Conservative Party and to bring their costing to the table? We've called them over and over again, and they are being blocked by the opposition.

Will the member commit today that she will allow the candidates to come forward?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Yes, I'm going to go back to the energy minister. I do notice he has a pattern of only answering the last question I have so I have no opportunity for rebuttal. I'd really like to go back to him. You have been withholding information. Your Premier is hiding from questioning, and you are denying debates in this House. They are not tactics of an honest broker, Minister. The Premier would not get away with not telling the truth if it were not for the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not acceptable. Withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn, Speaker, but we wouldn't be in this position—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Simply a quick withdrawal and then you proceed.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn, Speaker.

So let's review the facts. In the last two weeks, the Deputy Minister of Energy and the head of the OPA told us in the justice committee that the government knew the cost of the Oakville plant exceeded the \$40 million the Premier cited repeatedly for over two years. She continued to use that number in the House, and now she refuses to come before us under oath.

Will the minister tell me what the Premier is hiding and what she is afraid of?

Hon. John Milloy: The member is simply wrong. The Premier has indicated that she will go before the committee again, and they were working out a schedule, just as the Leader of the Opposition did with the three tries it took for us to get him before it.

I think we understand where the member is coming from. I'd like to quote from a press scrum that she had just this morning. A reporter said to the member who's asking the question, "You've got an AG report on both plants. You've had former leader McGuinty twice. We've had Premier Wynne there once. We've had Colin Andersen at least twice, maybe three times. I mean, at what point are you going to wrap this up?" And the member who just asked the question said, "Well, when we get the answers that we want."

We have been forthcoming. We have brought forward tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of documents. The Premier has stood in the House day after day and answered the questions. I can't help it if the truth doesn't fit her reality, Mr. Speaker. The simple fact is that we have co-operated—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Maybe the third time is the charm.

Back to the energy minister, because I won't have an opportunity for a rebuttal. Let's be perfectly clear. The reality of the facts is this: Your government wasted \$1 billion. Your leader told us it only cost \$40 million. And then yesterday you had the gall to stand in this House and deny a dying woman the cancer drug she needs because you are too busy wasting money, and that is not what the priorities of your government are. If this government's priorities weren't all wrong before, I don't know, Speaker, how much more they could go wrong.

No wonder the Premier wants the press gallery off-site during question period. No wonder—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. She has a right to put the question.

Continue, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: No wonder the Premier wants the press gallery off-site during question period. No wonder

she won't appear under oath. No wonder she cancelled the gas plants investigation for today.

Will the government House leader or the Minister of Energy stand in this place and commit to the people of Ontario that the Premier will testify—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: April 16: Four opposition candidates were invited to testify at the justice committee, including PC candidates Geoff Janoscik and Zoran Churchin; they all declined.

April 30: On the same day the Premier of this province appeared, the Leader of the Opposition is asked to testify; he declines. Backup witnesses Janoscik and Churchin also decline. We then invite PC candidate Mary Anne DeMonte-Whelan; she accepts and is scheduled to testify, then mysteriously calls back a few hours later to cancel.

May 2: Janoscik, Churchin and DeMonte-Whelan are called to testify. Janoscik tells the Clerk to stop calling, and the other two do not respond.

May 7: The Leader of the Opposition is once again invited to testify; he declines, even though he had written a letter to the committee saying that he would try to work for that date. Since he refuses, the Liberals call on Janoscik, Churchin, DeMonte-Whelan and the member from Halton, but none of them agree to testify—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. John Milloy: May 23: Janoscik, Churchin and DeMonte-Whelan all refuse to testify—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. That's it.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll take care of that part of it.

New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Ontario households and businesses are paying the highest electricity prices in Canada, and they're tired of being kept in the dark about electricity decisions. We've been pushing to get some answers, but despite promises of transparency and openness by this government, we're not getting them.

I'll start with a simple question. The Premier was not available to take questions at today's hearings on the cancelled gas plants. When will she be available, or is she refusing to attend?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: We've been very clear that the Premier, who has appeared in front of the committee before and who was asked over 200 questions in this House, has indicated her willingness to appear in front of the

committee, and her office is working with the Clerk of the Committee to find a date.

Mr. Speaker, again, when we invited the Leader of the Opposition to appear in front of the committee, it took several tries before he would agree. We've asked the member from Halton to appear in front of the committee; he has refused. We have asked Conservative candidates to appear in front of the committee; they have refused.

1050

Mr. Speaker, we have been forthcoming. It was this Premier who asked the Auditor General to look into the Oakville situation. It was this Premier who asked me, as House leader, to work to set up the committee, with a broad scope and broad powers, to undertake the examination that's going on. As I think I've mentioned already, she has answered over 200 questions in this Legislature, and she will be forthcoming in front of the committee in the near future when a date can be arranged with her office.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, that wasn't the straightest answer I've ever gotten.

People hear the government talk about transparency and openness, but they see the Premier scrambling to avoid testifying in her role in the cancellation of private power plants and refusing to let the auditor look at the \$180 million or more that they spent on nuclear plans that aren't going ahead.

People paying the bills think they deserve some answers, so I'll try an easier question. The minister insists that he's moving ahead with plans to refurbish nuclear plants. In fact, the government has already signed contracts worth nearly a billion dollars. Has the minister done any cost-benefit analysis, and, if so, will he table that analysis today?

Hon. John Milloy: Minister of Energy, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: There were several issues raised in the question, and I'm going to answer the question by asking a question, Mr. Speaker.

The New Democratic Party, both on transit and on energy issues, have no program; they have no policy. They stand up and ask questions. They are not accountable to their own base. They are not accountable to the public in Ontario. They have no answers for energy; they have no answers for transit.

I would like the critic who is responsible for creating alternative policy to the government's to come forward with a platform on energy, transit and transportation that makes sense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: So I take that as a no.

Again to the Minister of Energy: Households and businesses are paying the highest electricity bills in the country, and they see a Premier refusing to answer basic questions about a billion dollars handed to private power interests for gas plants that won't be built, a government that refuses to answer questions about hundreds of millions spent on abandoned nuclear plans and a minister

who is signing nuclear power contracts worth hundreds of millions but can't produce a business case to justify the expenditure. Does that minister think that's acceptable to people who are paying more and more?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the questions have been asked on a number of occasions, and they have been answered, and I'll answer them again.

Expenditures to date on nuclear refurbishment are for definition phase activities such as the establishment of project organization, scope finalization, engineering, planning, procurement and contracting. In fact, the project itself is going to create 25,000 jobs for the province of Ontario, particularly here in the GTA.

We also have an independent oversight adviser who will provide regular updates on the progress of the Darlington nuclear refurbishing project to the Ministry of Energy.

We are moving forward responsibly. We are moving forward on the basis of not building new nuclear in the foreseeable future, a decision which that critic has agreed with. He said yes to no new nuclear.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Somebody should tell him not to point all the time. It's not polite.

My question is to the Acting Premier. People are concerned about the cost of everyday life. Families across Ontario haven't seen a real raise in years. The cost of everyday life is going up, and instead of making life more affordable, your government is letting people fall further and further behind.

New Democrats and Andrea Horwath have worked hard to deliver results that will make life affordable so that people can stop treading water and start getting ahead, like people getting a 15% reduction in their auto insurance rates. Can the Acting Premier tell us why people's auto insurance rates are still going up?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Well, I'm pleased to say that as a result of the hard work that this side of the House has been doing, we've been fighting to reduce the cost of the claims, trying to ensure that the degree of fraud and other circumstances that are creating those premiums to have gone up over these past number of years—that we start to get them going down.

As a result of the legislation that we've passed with your support—and I appreciate the work of the third party in these endeavours. But I am pleased that rates have, in fact, on average, been reduced to a point. We are anticipating greater reductions in the next release, in January, as a result of the work that we've done to give FSCO more control, more teeth and more oversight. As a result of those initiatives, we are confident that that work will enable us to have better premiums overall.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, Minister, I'm going to quote my good friend the member from Trinity-Spadina and say that drivers are being whacked. We're seeing

people's insurance rates go up. We have an email from William, who says his auto insurance in Durham has gone up 16%. Lena from Hamilton writes in and says her auto insurance has gone up 11%. So as people are getting squeezed, they're falling further and further behind.

Many of these same drivers who are seeing their auto insurance going up are getting hit when it comes to the Drive Clean program, having to pay twice for tests that they've actually passed, but the machinery says that they failed.

So I ask you: Can the Acting Premier explain to me, and to those people, why people are falling further behind under this government's watch?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I'll tell the public, who may be watching, to call this hotline if they wish to issue a complaint to FSCO. It's 1-855-584-7669. Now, you can call that number or you can call the Ombudsman to create or at least explain some of the difficulties that may be arising.

But I can say this: Rates, for the third quarter in a row, have been dropping on average. I can cite issues where people have actually received more than 15% reductions on their renewals as a result of making those calls and shopping around. So I encourage people to do just that.

We are fighting fraud. We're looking at what happens with regard to the tow trucks, the collision repairs, the health clinics. We're providing greater rates for safe drivers. We're implementing new dispute resolution reviews. All of these, and the watchdog that's going to be implemented, will enable us to champion and fight on behalf of our consumers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the Acting Premier: It's clear that people back home are feeling squeezed, and what's clearer is that it would appear this government is dragging its feet when it comes to dealing with auto insurance rates going down, or dealing with the Drive Clean program.

People under Drive Clean are having to pay more than they should in order to make sure that they meet the standards. Why? Because the program doesn't work effectively, as they are failing, even though their cars are safe because of the equipment.

So I say to you, whether it's big costs like auto insurance or lots of smaller costs like multiple Drive Clean tests for cars that aren't big polluters, people are feeling like they're falling further and further behind.

Why is the Premier, and the Acting Premier, letting people fall further and further behind in this province?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, this side of the House has been fighting hard to find jobs and create stimulus so those people could be working, and that's the issue. There is a lot of concern still as a result of our global recession that continues to exist. But here in Ontario, our fundamentals are strong. People are working, and there is greater confidence in where we're going.

We're fighting auto insurance rates. We're doing everything necessary to protect individuals with their

pensions, Mr. Speaker. No one on that side of the House is even looking forward. We're doing that here. We'll continue to fight for the people of Ontario.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. Speaker, following the Premier's announcement last week of a new era of transparency for her government, I asked her to table the Metrolinx-Bombardier \$770-million contract. That's a contract that was sole-sourced, is costing taxpayers millions in penalties today and is another indication of the mismanagement of her government.

I received a letter this morning from Metrolinx. Not surprisingly, this letter confirms that the government will be dealing with this document in the same way that it dealt with the gas plant documents. From Mr. Bruce McCuaig: We're working on it, but "parts of the contract may be redacted." Why is that not surprising?

I'm going to ask the minister to ensure that we get that contract into our hands unredacted so that we know what the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

1100

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm getting to feel a great, great amount of empathy for the member from Newmarket-Aurora. He just seems to have trouble getting any position which the facts will support.

First he was proffering that there was a \$70-million penalty. Bombardier told him it wasn't true; Metrolinx told him it wasn't true. I told him it wasn't true, but he keeps on repeating it. So let me say again, it's not true. The contract is proceeding.

This is a party that seems to have something against not just public transit, but Bombardier. They want to cancel all the projects, freeze GO, cancel LRT. That would destroy Bombardier. I have never seen a Conservative Party attack business the way they did. Bombardier provides excellent service and gives us great value.

The Premier and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities were out doing a partnership with Centennial College to increase job creation.

Bombardier is one of our biggest employers and fastest-growing companies—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I have no problem with Bombardier. It's the government that's bungling millions and millions of dollars through contracts that are, quite frankly, a bungling on his part. Why doesn't the minister know what is in this contract?

The fact of the matter is I now have a letter from Metrolinx that insists that the contract I referred to was,

in fact, competitively bid. That is patently false; it is not true. This was an option, under a contract that was signed a year before, under which that contract gave Metrolinx an option. That option should never have been taken out; that option should have been publicly bid and saved the taxpayers some \$200 million.

I want to say to the minister now: Get your facts straight. Bring that contract forward. Let us all see what the facts are and then we'll draw the conclusion about who—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Mr. Frank Klees:—wrong.

Will the minister agree to get that contract into this House, unredacted, so we know what they did?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Speaker, if business has friends like that, they don't need enemies. This is a party that wants to cancel almost every major rapid transit project in Ontario. That would, first of all, cost billions of dollars to that company. It would cost billions of dollars in cancelled projects. This is the party that thinks they can buy gas plants for free at garage sales; I guess that's where they want to buy their transit projects. They don't seem to understand that infrastructure costs money. They don't have any plan to pay for it, but they want to cancel it.

The contracts negotiated between Metrolinx and Bombardier are quite transparent.

As the city council in Kitchener–Waterloo said to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, “You’re dead wrong.” I have to agree with the council in Kitchener.

My dear friend from Newmarket–Aurora is just simply wrong.

ONTARIO MUNICIPAL BOARD

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Last week, you announced a land use planning review that specifically excludes OMB operations. This is not what communities were asking for, and this is not what you promised two months ago. It's another bait and switch, just like Bill 26 in 2004, which was supposed to make OMB decisions consistent with provincial policy, and just like Bill 51 in 2007, which the government said would “make municipal councils the decision-makers with respect to planning.”

Despite these bills, the OMB remains out of control. Earlier this year, the OMB ignored Waterloo region's official plan and defied the province's own Places to Grow Act. When will the government finally reform the undemocratic and out-of-control OMB?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I appreciate the member's passion on this issue. We have spoken about this many times and I think that, certainly at the province, this government believes that we have a strong and modern land use planning system, and we believe we have a well-

established development charges system, which is what I announced just last week.

We heard from many municipalities, community groups and developers who want more accountability and more transparency in the system. We believe it's time for a refresh, and certainly we believe that good land use planning is important to ensuring the long-term prosperity of our province for our environmental health and the social well-being of Ontarians.

When I spoke about the land use planning announcement last week, we talked about including the OMB and development charges to better meet the need of 424 municipalities across Ontario. We need to hear the views of everyone. Certainly, we have conflicting views. I look forward to any input that the member makes going forward, and I look forward to the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: In 2011, the Minister of Labour promised the people of Ottawa that, if re-elected, he would reform the OMB. He was re-elected, and nothing happened.

In 2012, the Minister of Finance promised the people of Mississauga that he would rein in the OMB—in months, not years, he said. It's been over one year, and nothing has happened. Instead, we have a bait-and-switch government review that focuses more on the needs of developers than the needs of communities and municipal planners.

When will the government stop making false promises and admit it has no intention of ever reforming the OMB?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I don't share the negative perception that the member has. Certainly, I understand that everybody has concerns, and the member from Ottawa and many of my colleagues on both sides of the House have expressed concerns about how we can improve the system.

We have a very short-scoped period of time. Before the end of the year, I'm hoping to hear from developers, from municipalities and from community groups. I think we certainly want a more accountable and transparent system, and we believe it's important to find a balance with all of land use planning across Ontario. Everyone has a stake in making planning work across Ontario, whether it's community groups, whether it's municipalities. From the building and development industry I've heard that they want to put in changes that will implement predictability, transparency and cost-effectiveness for communities and for businesses across Ontario because these moves will attract and retain business in Ontario.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the job-creating Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member must use the title or the riding only.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I agree. The member should withdraw.

Mr. Grant Crack: Our government's economic plan—investing in people, investing in infrastructure and creating the right business climate for job creation in Ontario—is something we are prioritizing. We can't do this unless we help the small businesses and the people they employ across the province.

On Wednesday, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, a body which represents over 42,000 small businesses across Ontario, released an open letter. It was addressed to the minister and also to the Minister of Finance, requesting that this House pass Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, and proceed with the next stage of the legislative process. Could the minister please inform the House, along with the members of the CFIB, why this bill has not moved to committee yet, even though it has been debated for 15½ long hours?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It's a great question and, yes, small businesses are an integral part of Ontario's economy. Bill 105 will help to support small business in Ontario and ensure that 60,000 small businesses will pay less employer health tax—in fact, it'll eliminate that tax altogether for 12,000 small businesses in this province. This legislation is exactly what we need to help drive the economy forward, help small businesses and support the creation of new jobs.

Now, the PCs have stood up in this House time and time again to ask us where our plan is. This is part of our plan. But members of the official opposition continue to denigrate the hard work that Ontarians do for this province and do for Ontario's economy. Some 42,000 small businesses have voiced their opinions, and we're trying to do something good here for the small businesses of Ontario.

The fact that this bill has not moved forward to committee despite over 15 hours of debate is disappointing, to say the least. I urge all members of this House to work together, heed the calls from CFIB, do the right thing and push this bill—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock, please.

Weaving in and out of government policy is one thing, but I want to remind both the questioner and the answerer to stay on government policy, please.

Carry on.

1110

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for the update. It's disappointing to hear that we're unable to find some common ground on doing the right thing for the economy, and also the right thing for our small businesses in Ontario.

We received another letter on this issue from Tanner Financial, a small business located here in Ontario. It stated, "Our firm provides benefits to financial planning to small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario. We

have found that many of our smaller clients are still in a stage of growth where any tax is prohibitive to their success." It goes on to say, "Increasing the exemption by any amount will have a positive impact."

The letter goes on to urge this House to work together and pass this important bill.

Can the minister please inform the members of this House how it might implicate small businesses like Tanner Financial, and the small business owners who run them, if this House cannot work together to pass this important bill?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, again, to the member for his question. There are roughly—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Prince Edward—Hastings will come to order.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: There are roughly 400,000 small and medium-sized firms in Ontario. This figure represents 99% of all businesses operating in this province; it's obviously a significant source of employment. By providing the right kind of support that small businesses need, Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, can play a very strong role in the economy. That's exactly the work that all of us need to do as elected members of this House.

This government's priority is to create good jobs and grow our economy, and we're doing this by investing in people, investing in infrastructure and creating a dynamic and innovative climate for businesses to succeed. Bill 105 will do this. By not supporting this important legislation, we're not supporting organizations like the CFIB and Tanner Financial. Ultimately, we're not supporting a growing business environment in Ontario which is good for the economy and an integral part of creating good, meaningful jobs.

DRIVE CLEAN

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, the Supreme Court has ruled that profits made off of revenue-neutral programs are illegal and must be paid back, yet you continue to flout the law in order to keep collecting multi-million-dollar surpluses every year using the Drive Clean program. In fact, in just two years, the Liberals have collected an additional \$30 million using their illegal Drive Clean tax grab.

Minister, it's time to show some respect for the law, so will you comply with the Supreme Court's ruling today by ending this abuse of Ontarians' hard-earned money and by paying back all of the revenue you've collected in your illegal Drive Clean tax grab?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Here we are again with the Conservative Party attacking a program which is designed to improve air—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I guess you might not be getting the message.

Minister of the Environment, please be seated.

The member from Renfrew will come to order, the member for Leeds–Grenville will come to order and the member for Halton will come to order. That's enough.

Carry on.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member will be aware that, for the first decade, this program was actually in deficit. In other words, it was costing money to provide this program, which was established by the Conservative government a number of years ago, in 1999. I want to tell him, and this may surprise some of the new members in the Conservative Party, that the only increase in price that has come to the Drive Clean program was implemented in 2002 by the Conservative government of Mike Harris—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You ask, you're going to get it. The member from Prince–Edward Hastings is warned.

Finish your answer: a 10-second wrap-up.

Hon. James J. Bradley: —of which some members sitting on the benches, including your leader, were part. That's the only increase that we have seen.

I am working at the present time with the Minister of Finance—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Minister, now that your government is getting advice from former PC environment minister Norm Sterling, I'm wondering if you're going to be taking his advice on Drive Clean. From your conversations with him, you clearly know that a Progressive Conservative government would have phased this temporary program out long ago. That's why we've been calling on the Liberal government to scrap the program for years.

I'm sure you watched CTV News and saw Mr. Sterling recommend that it's time to sit down, work together and phase out Drive Clean. Minister, will you accept Mr. Sterling's advice and start working with us to scrap Drive Clean once and for all?

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's interesting that you would, in fact, ask me to accept the advice of a member of your party who was thrown under the bus, who was denied the nomination.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order: You spoke to that before, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There's no point of order right now. Stop the clock, please.

If you would take my advice, maybe we would be able to make sure that these things didn't happen. I didn't hear it because I was dealing with somebody heckling over here.

If you need to withdraw, I would ask you to withdraw.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I will withdraw, of course.

But here we go again with the Tories and their inexplicable war on clean air. They won't be happy until they stoke up the coal plants again, including the Nanticoke plant. It appears they want to rev those up again.

They want to put some 36,000 tonnes of smog pollutants in the air we breathe by replacing Drive Clean with their drive dirty program, and ultimately, I can say this is what—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

BEAR CONTROL

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Acting Premier. Last year, the government cut the MNR program for the live trapping and relocation of nuisance bears, and since then there have been several near-fatal bear attacks across the province, the last one in Peterborough. In parts of my riding, human-bear encounters are a daily occurrence, further increasing the risk of attack.

This afternoon, your government will have the chance to support my motion to create a special committee to develop a provincial bear management strategy. Will you?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to respond.

I think what we can say is that our government certainly supports the spirit of the motion that's coming forward. We are always interested in having further discussions about important matters such as the one that will be coming forward this afternoon, and I think the member understands that the Ministry of Natural Resources treats this as a very serious issue as well. We maintain that public safety is the number one priority, particularly as it relates to the issue of human-bear conflicts. The ministry is looking at instances of human-bear conflicts across the province, looking at available options to address the issue and evaluating some of the wildlife management options.

I think it's also important that the member opposite and certainly our members here acknowledge the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, who has brought forward a private member's bill as well which recognizes the challenges before us. Certainly we thank you for that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again to the Acting Premier: In response to my question on October 3 regarding the Liberal government's cuts to the bear management program, the Minister of Natural Resources stated, "This is an issue that we take very seriously, and we are developing a plan." Don't you think that it's about time you consulted with the people who actually deal with bears on a daily basis, the people who actually live in bear country? This special committee would travel throughout the province and actually consult with them.

Once again, will your government support my motion to create an all-party committee to actually address the bear management issue in this province?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Well, indeed, when the minister addressed that issue and said we were looking at a plan, that's indeed the case. He understands very much how this is a very significant issue. It's a public safety

issue, and indeed the wildlife management options are being explored. Again, our colleague from Thunder Bay—Atikokan has a private member's bill that's also going to be coming before the House, and I think it's important to accept the real leadership being shown by him as well.

Again, the spirit of the motion is one that we welcome, and further discussion with northerners is always welcome, but again, the Ministry of Natural Resources is taking this very seriously, evaluating various options, and we want to continue to work with the member opposite and all members in the House to find some solution to this challenge.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Minister, each summer I attend musical, artistic and cultural festivals in western Mississauga. I watch our artists and our performers just pour their hearts out into their music and their choreography, and I appreciate that the musical community in our province of Ontario is passionate about its work.

1120

Earlier this year, you and the Minister of Finance announced the Ontario Music Fund, which focuses on stimulating economic growth, raising the global profile and building a dynamic market for our music companies and performing artists. Much anticipated in the arts community, the Ontario Music Fund was officially launched earlier this week. Would the minister please explain to the House some of the highlights of the Ontario Music Fund?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the member from Mississauga—Streetsville for asking that wonderful question. I say "wonderful" because the Ontario Music Fund is really a wonderful program. This is a program that contributes a \$45-million commitment we made in the 2013 budget. It contributes \$15 million over three years to capitalize on the success of our music industry and accelerate Ontario's economic growth.

The OMF will support sound recording in Ontario, marketing and promotion of Canadian artists, live performances, both in Ontario and abroad, and business development initiatives. This will be accomplished through four streams: music company development, music industry development, music futures and live music. The music company development and music industry development stream will launch October 28.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Minister, Ontario is English Canada's cultural and artistic hub. Like any type of business, the arts community needs a state-of-the-art infrastructure. We have the creative and performing talent, and Ontario's music industry also needs the tools and facilities to succeed in today's dynamic and rapidly changing music industry.

Ontario's musicians of tomorrow—bands like Nigel and the Senators—need to know how to get their music produced, promoted and protected. Mississauga's local

studios like Metalworks and Sonic Sound need to connect the best musical talent with both world markets and local gigs. Minister, please explain how this funding benefits Ontario's music industry.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question again. Ontario's vibrant and diverse music industry is a vital contributor to the province's cultural and economic prosperity. In 2011, Ontario's music sector generated over \$429 million in revenues, accounting for almost 82% of Canada's total revenues.

Our province is home to Canada's largest and one of the world's most diversified music sectors. The new Ontario Music Fund represents a significant commitment by Ontario to strengthen our music industry. This is why we created a new Ontario Music Fund as part of the 2013 Ontario budget.

PENSION PLANS

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Tomorrow, November 1, is the start of financial planning awareness month. Also, tomorrow, you will meet other provincial finance ministers to discuss enhancing the CPP. Our employees and employers cannot afford any more mandatory deductions that an enhanced CPP or new OPP would entail. They're already having trouble making ends meet. Why, then, Minister, are you failing Ontarians by not allowing PRPPs, pooled registered pension plans? You adopted our PRPP plan into your 2013 budget; why are you stalling?

Instead of a new Ontario pension plan, why don't you allow PRPPs for Ontarians to save by themselves, for themselves, with lower costs and greater flexibility? Or don't you trust Ontario's workers with their own money?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Well, there you have it. That side of the House feels it's not important to support the families of Ontario by suggesting that we not give them other opportunities. We are introducing PRPPs, a voluntary program. We said we would, and we're proceeding to do that. That's not in question. The point being made, though, is they feel middle-class families can live on \$12,000 a year when they retire. We don't accept that on this side of the House. We're going to work and champion the cause for them in the years to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Minister, I'm concerned with your inaction on improving the retirement security of Ontarians. In 2016, there will be more people drawing from a public sector pension than paying into one. This is leading to \$100 billion in unfunded liabilities. People are living longer, and the return on retirement investments has never been lower. As the tsunami of retirees appears on the Ontario horizon, we need to deal with the reform of the public pension system.

Minister, what is your government doing to reduce the over \$100 billion of unfunded liabilities within the public sector?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'm not trying to be cute here, I think we all share the concern that the people of Ontario

deserve to retire with some decency, with security and with a degree of comfort, knowing that when they do retire, all the hard work and the investments they made will pay off.

The member opposite has been doing some work to that effect with voluntary pooled retirement pension plans. We are proceeding with that. It's a voluntary program. We're going to provide more choice. There are a lot of Ontarians who do have flexibility, but we know that more than 50% to 60% do not, and it's those we're trying to protect. It's those middle-class citizens, especially, who need support, and I look to that side of the House to recognize that, to accept that we need to work with all of the provinces across Canada. That's what I'll be doing tomorrow with my colleagues, so that we can propose and encourage—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. As the minister knows, Windsor hospitals are being threatened with the loss of funding for all cancer surgeries if they do not comply with a Cancer Care Ontario directive to transfer thoracic surgeries to London by December 1.

My question is simple: Is the minister going to allow this dispute to escalate to the point where Windsor patients lose access to vital cancer surgery?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can say is that I am absolutely committed that Windsor-area patients receive the highest possible quality cancer care.

Speaker, I rely on the advice of experts, including experts at Cancer Care Ontario, to ensure that all Ontario patients, including those in Windsor, get the highest-quality care. They are doing a great job. In fact, Ontario cancer patients have among the best survival rates in the world.

As part of their work, Cancer Care Ontario has implemented the thoracic surgical oncology standards that are evidence-based. Within those standards, CCO has set out that hospitals need to meet a minimum volume of surgeries in order to be designated a thoracic centre. That minimum requirement is 150 in 2012-13. There were 49 thoracic surgeries performed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The question is about access to care in our communities in Windsor. Apparently, the minister's version of the map of Ontario really does end in London.

I understand that the dispute between Cancer Care Ontario and Windsor hospitals has been occurring for the better part of six months, and yet the minister has really done nothing.

Windsor hospitals are also concerned that the loss of thoracic surgeries will have a long list of detrimental effects and impacts on their patients. Now patients fear the loss of all cancer surgeries in the region, and they're

wondering who is going to stand and protect their access to health care.

Can the minister explain how she's going to solve this problem so that cancer services in Windsor are preserved?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure the member opposite, and the member from Windsor West, that Windsor patients will continue to receive cancer care in Windsor.

As a result of Cancer Care Ontario's work, the 30-day, post-op mortality rate for the removal of a lung has been cut in half. Let me repeat that: The mortality rate has been cut in half, thanks to Cancer Care Ontario's focus on improving quality of care.

I have been working very hard with the member from Windsor West on this issue. We continue to work to ensure that Windsor-area patients continue to receive the highest-quality care.

1130

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. In my role as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, I've engaged in a number of important discussions with municipal partners across the province.

In particular, at the AMO conference last August, I joined with the Minister of Northern Development and Mines as well as a number of other ministers from our government for a meeting with the Northern Ontario Large Urban Mayors. At this meeting, the northern mayors shared with our government key priorities on how we can advance the growth plan for northern Ontario.

Will the Minister of Northern Development and Mines please provide the House with an update on how our government is working to address those priorities that were outlined by the northern mayors?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to address this question today. I want to let the members of the Legislature know that yesterday we reached out to the Northern Ontario Large Urban Mayors and a number of other northern municipal leaders to share the very exciting news that the province will be hosting a northern leaders' forum on December 6, 2013, in the beautiful northern community of Timmins. This forum is going to be bringing together municipal, aboriginal and community leaders, as well as a number of our government ministers, to work to identify opportunities to advance the objectives of the northern Ontario growth plan.

We understand how important it is to work with our partners to build on the competitive advantages of northern Ontario. It's part of our government's plan to support a dynamic and innovative business climate that attracts investment and continues to create jobs. We're very excited about the northern leaders' forum.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Minister. This forum is a key priority that the northern mayors were advocating for, something I know they are going to be very pleased to hear is taking place in the next few weeks. Under the leadership of our Premier, regional collaboration between municipalities has been welcomed and encouraged to ensure that we benefit the people of Ontario in the greatest possible manner.

It's also great to hear the Minister of Northern Development and Mines speaking positively about advancing the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario through initiatives such as the recent program changes and this northern leaders' forum.

Will the minister now please share with the House how the northern leaders' forum is going to help advance the actual implementation of the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Certainly one of the requests at the meeting we had with AMO was to have a northern leaders' forum such as I'm announcing today. I'm very pleased that our government is able to fulfill the requests of the NOLUM mayors.

Our government has always placed an extremely high priority on working with our partners across the north, and that has only been more emphasized under Premier Wynne's leadership.

Our government first released the growth plan as a blueprint for job creation and economic development over the next 25 years throughout the north. Since its release a couple of years ago, we have seen communities, organizations, businesses and aboriginal groups achieve some amazing things that have unequivocally shown to me and proven my belief in the strength and the resilience that we all share as northerners.

This forum is going to provide a great opportunity for our government and our northern partners to renew momentum and drive forward the next phase of the growth plan.

SNOWMOBILING

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. Minister, snowmobile clubs in my riding and across Ontario have come to us in distress. They've been told by Hydro One, on the orders of your ministry, that effective January 1, 2014, they will no longer have access to the use of hydro corridors unless the local municipalities enter into agreements to not only fund 50% of the total cost of taxes on the land, but also ensure that all trails are moved 15 metres away from any tower, that fencing and gates are installed, and that the areas are monitored year-round.

Minister, there are a few problems with this. The Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs tells us it's impossible to move the trails 15 metres away from any tower. Second, they question why they should have to maintain the trails year-round when they are multi-use trails—other people use these trails outside of snowmobile season. Third, how much is this going to cost and impact the industry?

Minister, these are valid concerns. Can you please explain why local clubs and municipalities are being asked to maintain and pay the taxes on lands that are owned by the province of Ontario, or is this yet another Liberal tax grab?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member for the question. I always greatly appreciate when members are raising issues on behalf of important constituencies. This is the first I've heard of this, to be very honest with you. It concerns me greatly. I will certainly look into it. There could be an issue between hydro and safety issues. I can't speculate in detail on what the issue would be. I take the member's concern as sincere, and I will commit to working with him to resolve this issue.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Minister: Minister, the use of hydro corridors is paramount, as you know, to the snowmobile trail system. These new requirements will impact snowmobile clubs across the province and may needlessly lead to the dissolution of an industry that's presently thriving.

To give the minister an idea of the impact of this new regulation, the cost estimate done in my riding by the township of Springwater found that their share of the cost of the taxes on a mere three kilometres of trail to be \$3,700 per year. Remember, there are thousands of kilometres of trail using hydro corridors, and this is only for three kilometres. They will also be responsible for the fencing and maintenance.

Snowmobile clubs can't afford this, obviously, and municipalities can't afford it. This issue affects thousands of snowmobile clubs, thousands of dealers, thousands of restaurants, hotels, gas stations and thousands of jobs in rural Ontario.

Is your government prepared to create another complete disarray in a thriving industry like the snowmobile industry in Ontario just like you did in the horse racing industry, or will you act now to ensure this doesn't happen?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, my tone to the member was very constructive and positive, so if we could just park the rhetoric for a moment.

We're working very closely with snowmobile clubs right now to look at integrating our fee systems with Minnesota, Manitoba and others. We've had a number of concerns raised by snowmobile clubs. As you know, we have a very good agreement that's up for renewal with them, where they maintain trails and we fund them and we collect a fee.

I'm quite surprised, Mr. Speaker, given the level of contact we have with these clubs, that they have not raised this issue with me. I am very glad they've raised the issue with the member opposite.

I have a great respect for the member and will look forward to working with him to resolve it. I certainly share the concern, if those facts are as he says they are, and I have no reason to disbelieve him. I am not satisfied with them. I will work with him to correct the situation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The member from—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Parkdale—High Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Parkdale–High Park.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Housing. Some 165,723 people languish on affordable housing wait-lists in Toronto alone—an abysmal new record. The city of Toronto, as well as many other municipalities across Ontario, including London and Thunder Bay, express support for my inclusionary zoning bill. Even Hazel is supportive. The Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario, representing planning directors, commissioners, and senior officials of municipal governments, also all supported my bill.

Inclusionary zoning would provide up to 12,000 new units a year in affordable housing and address the crisis that is plaguing Ontario without one tax dollar being spent.

My inclusionary zoning bill has been introduced four—count them—times and was referred to committee, but the Liberal government has refused to bring it forward or to act on it. How many more families have to be on the waiting lists for this government to act?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I thank the member for the question. Certainly, we realize that this is a very serious issue. Since 2003, we've invested \$3 billion, the largest affordable housing program ever in the province's history.

I want to thank the member for her advocacy on this file. I know that she has the private member's bill on inclusionary zoning.

We believe that municipalities are in the best position to understand local needs. That's why we gave municipalities some of the tools they need to look at affordable housing options. I know Toronto has been looking at some options in the last week. We're happy to work with them, and I'm happy to work with the member, ongoing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I apologize to the member from Parkdale–High Park. I have these brain things happen from time to time.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

KIMM FLETCHER

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Yesterday, Kimm Fletcher, a mother of two who has been diagnosed with brain cancer, came to the Legislature to plead with the Minister of Health to allow OHIP coverage for the drug Avastin, which could extend her life by a year and even longer. Kimm won the hearts of everyone here as we rose in our places to give her a warm and prolonged standing ovation. The minister, however, would only consent to review the findings of her drug evaluation committee, without providing any immediate help.

Today, on behalf of the Parliament of Ontario, I want to tell Kimm that she is not alone. I want to tell her husband, Scott, and her children, Keidon and Martie, that they are not alone, because the people of Ontario are with them in love and support.

But Kimm needs our help right now. For further information on how you can make a donation so that Kimm can get the Avastin that she needs so desperately, please go to www.gofundme.com or to tedchudleigh.com for a complete address. Let's show Kimm how much we truly do stand with her at this time of her greatest need.

On behalf of Kimm and her family, I thank you.

SOCIAL INNOVATION SHARED SPACE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Environmental challenges, persistently high levels of unemployment and the growing gap between the rich and the poor underscore the need for new approaches to economic and social development. In particular, the social economy—or businesses with a social purpose—is now recognized as a vital component of a dynamic economic development strategy. It provides jobs for youth and marginalized people and also addresses human, environmental and community needs.

Today, I rise as MPP for London West to share with this House a social economy initiative in my community that has the potential to be a game-changer for London. London's Social Innovation Shared Space initiative is being led by Pillar Nonprofit Network, in collaboration with Emerging Leaders, the London Arts Council and the London Heritage Council. It will bring together a range of social enterprises and social entrepreneurs under one roof, enabling start-ups and more established organizations to share facilities, equipment and services that might otherwise be too costly. More importantly, it will generate synergies and spark the creative exchange of ideas between like-minded individuals and organizations.

Letters of intent from prospective tenants are being accepted until November 15, with a move-in date as early as next year.

At a time when cynicism toward government is at its peak, the social economy demonstrates the importance of active and engaged citizenship, and I am proud to support this exciting initiative in my community.

DENTURISTS

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise today to acknowledge October as Denturist Awareness Month. Denturists are an integral part of our oral health care team, particularly for a growing population of older Ontarians.

Our government is committed to ensuring older Ontarians get the right care in the right place at the right time. Ontario's Seniors Strategy, led by Dr. Samir Sinha, is a vital part of this commitment. We are working to implement many of Dr. Sinha's recommendations so older Ontarians can stay healthy and continue to lead active lives.

Good oral health is essential to overall well-being at any age, and as the Ontario population grows older, our

denturists are playing an essential role in promoting and ensuring proper oral care. That's why denturists and the Denturist Association of Ontario are such key partners as we move forward with the Ontario Seniors Strategy.

I believe the executive members of the Denturist Association of Ontario are joining us today in the House. I'd like to thank them, and denturists across Ontario, for the hard work they do every day to return smiles to so many Ontario seniors.

I'd like to thank them again for all the work they do and welcome them to Queen's Park.

COMMUNITIES IN BLOOM AWARDS

Mr. John Yakabuski: We used to call Pembroke the prettiest little city in Canada. With the recent win at the Communities in Bloom competition, we're going to have to raise that bar. Pembroke's now the prettiest little city in the world.

Last Saturday, they received the top prize in the Communities in Bloom, International Challenge, medium division. Pembroke beat out Trail and Castlegar in British Columbia, Città di Savignano in Italy and Sidmouth in England.

The city of Pembroke has been competing in Communities in Bloom since 1999 and is a previous provincial and national competition winner. With this most recent title, they are now on top of the world.

The city received the award at a ceremony held in Ottawa at the Government Conference Centre.

Added to the awards this year was a special award for the Renaissance Square project at Algonquin College's Pembroke campus.

I've had the pleasure in the last 10 years to see firsthand the effort put forth by the Communities in Bloom committee, the city of Pembroke and their department of economic development, tourism and recreation, to make their community the best that it can be.

Each year, volunteer judges visit all the communities, narrow it down to the finalists and make their decision. I've also had the opportunity to meet and chat with those judges on a number of occasions, and I commend them for their commitment to Communities in Bloom.

On behalf of this Legislature, I would like to congratulate the city of Pembroke, the local Communities in Bloom committee and their chairperson, Mary Ethier, as well as the Pembroke Horticultural Society which does such a tremendous job in maintaining the flowerbeds across the city, and, of course, the businesses and residents whose commitment has made this possible.

I know they will work just as hard in the future to ensure that Pembroke continues to be one of the nicest places to visit in all the world.

HALLOWEEN

Mr. Michael Prue: It behooves me to stand here today on this All Hallow's Eve, replete with my tie, to

talk about this day. It has its roots in the Celtic Samhain, which was a fall festival, but one of the things that it was best known for: That was the night on which the ghosts and the dead walked free upon the earth, the day before All Saints' Day.

From those faraway roots, it has changed quite a bit. For many years, Halloween was looked upon by many people as a pagan festival, and they frowned upon the ritual of the whole night. But I will tell you that, increasingly, it is being embraced as a fun time, a night of frivolity, children and their parents getting out to meet their neighbours, decorated houses, candies, treats and all of these things.

But I wanted to pay special attention to some young people who won't be able to participate tonight, and those are our pages. They come from all over Ontario and some of them, sadly, will not be able to get home tonight, but I know that their instructor-coordinator, Erin Tedford, and the assistant, Paula Carreiro, will do everything in their power to make sure that they have fun here today. I hope the pages here learn a great deal, that even when you're hard at work in a place like this, you can still have fun. So if they come around to see the members, please be very generous.

To all out there, please have a safe and happy Halloween.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You mean free chocolates?

Members' statements? The member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

COLTEN AND LUKE RYBUCK

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I rise to honour Colten and Luke Rybuck, two courageous young men from Oak Ridges who risked their lives to help save a stranger's.

In the early hours of the morning of September 17, Colten and Luke were on their way home when they heard a smoke alarm. After following the noise, the brothers encountered a home with smoke pouring out of it and heard the shouts of someone trapped inside.

They took decisive action. Colten used his cellphone to call 911 while Luke kicked in the front door. The brothers entered the home, but had to abandon their rescue efforts for their own safety. They waited outside for emergency responders to arrive.

The Richmond Hill Fire Department has praised Colten and Luke for their quick thinking and believes that their actions helped save the homeowner's life.

On Tuesday night, these fine young men were honoured as heroes at the sixth annual Richmond Hill Fire and Emergency Services Awards. They were recognized for doing all the right things to help and knowing when to step back, when the risks to their own well-being were too great.

1310

Colten and Luke's actions speak volumes about their individual strength of character and the courage they both possess. Well done, Colten and Luke.

ALLAN STANLEY

Ms. Laurie Scott: I would like to take this opportunity to celebrate the life of Allan Stanley, a Canadian hockey legend.

After playing minor hockey in his hometown of Timmins, Allan had a long and accomplished hockey career that spanned 21 years, totalling 1,244 NHL games. The defenceman played in the NHL with the New York Rangers, the Chicago Blackhawks, the Boston Bruins and, most notably, the Toronto Maple Leafs.

As part of an NHL-best defence corps with Tim Horton, Allan won four Stanley Cups with the Maple Leafs and played his last game in the 1967 cup final. As I am sure some of you remember, in the final moments of a 2-to-1 Toronto lead, he would take on the Montreal captain, Jean Béliveau, by delivering a big bodycheck that sent the puck away from Béliveau and resulted in the Leafs scoring an empty-net goal to win their most recent Stanley Cup.

Fourteen years later, in 1981, Allan was honoured for his world-class hockey career by being selected to the Hockey Hall of Fame.

After his hockey career was over, Allan and his wife, Barbara, bought and operated the Bee Hive Hockey School complex near Bobcaygeon for over 20 years, until his retirement. In 2005, he was inducted into the Lindsay and District Sports Hall of Fame, commemorating the impact that Allan had on the local sporting community. His Hall of Fame expertise certainly was an influence on anyone who was looking to become a better hockey player.

I wanted to thank Allan and his wife for their dedication to their community. We certainly enjoyed having them in our riding for those many, many years.

SHERIDAN COLLEGE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I had the pleasure of touring the faculty of animation, art and design at Sheridan College in Oakville with our Premier on September 20. Having such a great institution in Oakville allows many of our young people to have the opportunity to pursue career-focused education or to build themselves an exciting and rewarding career in the skilled trades.

All of our greatest Premiers have always made public education their highest priority. They have understood the link between a quality education and a long-term job.

Many, many Sheridan graduates have worked on Hollywood films, but not many were involved in the largest-grossing film of all time. Roja Huchez, an animation graduate, has that honour. He worked on *Avatar* at Weta Digital in New Zealand, where he worked as a creature modeller. He modelled all the horses and the main chief and chief's wife characters, as well as some general characters. Then he went on to specialize in the facial modelling team, giving the chief and the general characters and creatures their facial expressions and the ability to speak and have emotion that showed so vividly

in the film. He now specializes in creature modelling, creating digital doubles and creating facial emotions for characters in a lot of feature films and commercials that we're all familiar with.

Speaker, with grads like Roja, I'm so humbled to have Sheridan College in my riding of Oakville doing such a wonderful job for the young people of our community.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to bring to the government's attention a resolution recently passed by the Town of the Blue Mountains. The resolution states, "Now therefore council of the corporation of the Town of the Blue Mountains hereby requests that the province of Ontario immediately enact Bill 2, Restoring Planning Powers to Municipalities Act, 2013."

Bill 2 is the legislation I introduced last February to ensure that local municipalities have final say on where wind turbines and solar farms can be located, or if they will even be allowed if the local people don't want them.

The Liberals' Green Energy Act is a matter of great concern in my riding and in communities across the province, as it removes local authority and control over the installation of massive renewable energy projects in rural communities.

This particular resolution was passed by the Blue Mountains and responds to a 72-foot-tall wind turbine being built in a small residential subdivision, a mere 35 feet from the neighbouring property line. To place that into perspective for the Minister of Energy, who doesn't seem to have a clue about these things, that's the approximate distance between me and you in this legislative chamber.

The wind turbine is being built despite vast opposition of neighbours and the town, because this government wants to tout a self-serving green energy agenda to produce energy we don't need and at prices we cannot afford. This is wrong.

I ask the Premier to listen to the people of Ontario and immediately restore local controls over renewable energy projects so that decisions over this project and ones like it are left up to the people who actually live there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LINCOLN ALEXANDER DAY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE JOUR
DE LINCOLN ALEXANDER

Mr. Arnott moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day /
Projet de loi 125, Loi proclamant le Jour de Lincoln Alexander.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I wish to begin by acknowledging the member for Scarborough—Rouge River and the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, who are co-sponsoring this bill today. I express my appreciation to them for their willingness to work together across the party lines and the party divide to do something important in this Legislature.

I also want to welcome to the Legislature today Marni Beal-Alexander. We also have Erika Alexander, Rosemary Sadlier and Joyce Alexander here today. We're very pleased to have them join us at the first reading of this bill, a bill that I hope will be supported by all members of the House.

As we know, Lincoln MacCauley Alexander was one of the most outstanding and accomplished Ontarians of our time. He was born on January 21, 1922. Rising above the prejudice of the era, he embraced the opportunity of public education. He developed his talents and reached his full potential through disciplined study and the strength of his character. He served in the Royal Canadian Air Force during World War II. Home again after the war, he graduated from McMaster University and Osgoode Hall Law School and qualified as a lawyer.

Responding to the call of public service, he was elected to the House of Commons in 1968, representing Hamilton West. In 1979, he was appointed Minister of Labour, making history as the government of Canada's first black cabinet minister. Later, he served as chair of the Workers' Compensation Board of Ontario, now known as the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board; as Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, the representative of Her Majesty the Queen; and as chancellor of the University of Guelph, among many other community contributions.

He passed away a year ago this month, on October 19, 2012, at the age of 90. His life was an example of service, determination and humility. Always fighting for equal rights for all races in our society and doing so without malice, he changed attitudes and contributed greatly to the inclusiveness and the tolerance of Canada today.

I would urge all members to support this bill when it comes for second reading later on in the month of November, proclaiming January 21—his birthday—as Lincoln Alexander Day in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would be remiss if I didn't mention the special affiliate to the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, as being a Hamiltonian, as Lincoln was—his dear Hamilton.

PETITIONS

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for petitions—and the member from Durham was up on the snap of a finger.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thanks very much. It's an honour to have some role here today in the Legislature, on Halloween day.

The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas approximately 20% of Ontario's electricity is produced at the Darlington generating station" in my riding of Durham;

"Whereas in addition to refurbishing the four existing reactors at the Darlington the building of new capacity is important for the future of Ontario's manufacturing sector and for jobs and investment in our Ontario;

1320

"Whereas a study by the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters in 2012 concluded the building of a new two-reactor plant at Darlington would directly employ more than 10,000 people and would support employment for an additional 10,000 others in Canada for approximately a five-year period;

"Whereas Ontario's Ministry of Energy says Ontario Power Generation has already spent an estimated \$180 million in preparation proceeding with the two new Darlington reactors;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Ontario's elected MPPs and the provincial government reaffirm their commitment to the complete refurbishment of all four units at the Darlington generating station and that the Ontario government reinstate the original plan for the completion of two new reactors at the Darlington generating station."

I'm pleased to sign and support it and give it to Helen, one of the pages.

TAXATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the cost of living in northwestern Ontario is significantly higher than other regions of the province due to the high cost of necessities such as hydro, home heating fuel, gasoline and auto insurance; and

"Whereas an increase in the price of any of these essential goods will make it even more difficult for people living in northwestern Ontario to pay their bills and put food on the table;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reject any proposed increase to the harmonized sales tax, gas tax or any other fees or taxes in the northwest; and instead investigate other means such as increasing corporate tax compliance or eliminating corporate tax loopholes in order to fund transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area."

I support this, will affix my signature and give it to page Benjamin to deliver to the table.

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr. John Fraser: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone's responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

"Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

"Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Environment."

I'm affixing my signature to this and giving it to page Louis.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I continue to get petitions from the Rail Trail community north of Port Elgin, and today it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has indicated it will be making improvements to Highway 21 between Port Elgin and Southampton in 2014; and

"Whereas the ministry has not acknowledged the repeated requests from the community and others to undertake safety enhancements to the portion of the highway where it intersects with the Saugeen Rail Trail crossing; and

"Whereas this trail is a vital part of an interconnected active transportation route providing significant recreational and economic benefit to the town of Saugeen Shores, the county of Bruce and beyond;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario to require the MTO to include, as part of the design for the improvements to Highway 21 between Port Elgin and Southampton, measures that will enhance the safety for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and all others that use the Rail Trail crossing; and to consult and collaborate with the town of Saugeen Shores and other groups in determining cost-effective measures that will maintain the function of the highway while aligning with the active transportation needs of all interested parties who use the Saugeen Rail Trail."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature, and I'll send it to the desk with Ben.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "Petition to Raise the Minimum Wage.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's minimum wage has been frozen at \$10.25 an hour since 2010, and some workers earn even less due to current exemptions in the Employment Standards Act; and

"Whereas full-time minimum wage workers are living at nearly 20% below the poverty line as measured by the Ontario government's low-income measure; and

"Whereas minimum wage should, as a matter of principle, bring people working 35 hours per week above the poverty line; and

"Whereas an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$14 per hour would bring workers' wages 10% above the" low-income measure "poverty line; and

"Whereas raising the minimum wage will benefit workers, local businesses and the economy by putting money in workers' pockets to spend in their local community;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately increase the minimum wage to \$14 per hour for all workers and thereafter increase it annually by no less than the cost of living."

I affix my signature. I'm going to give it to Louis to be delivered to the table.

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition from some residents in the province of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone's responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

"Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

"Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Environment."

I agree with this, Speaker, and will be sending it down to the table with Victoria.

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Frank Klees: I have a petition here that deals with youth mental health in our schools and communities, and I want to thank the Callows—Bob and Olga

Callow, James Callow and Samantha—Debbie Gust and Liz Virc for their initiative on this petition. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas youth mental health in the province of Ontario is rising at an alarming rate. According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 70% of mental health problems and illnesses have their onset during childhood or adolescence. Research shows that early identification leads to improved outcomes;

“Whereas, pursuant to the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, studies suggest 15% to 21% of children and youth, approximately 467,000 to 654,000 children and youth in Ontario, have at least one mental health disorder. The consequences can affect children and youth now and into adulthood, their families/caregivers, schools, communities, employers and the province as a whole;

“Whereas the 2010 Ontario report by the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions ... made specific recommendations that would address the growing mental health and addiction crisis among youth in the province, but no further concrete steps have been taken;

“Whereas waiting lists for help are at a crisis level and our schools do not have the resources to deal with the growing incidents of bullying, addiction, anxiety, depression and suicide. Education and awareness is critical to remove the stigma;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to prioritize funding and resources for our schools and communities to help our youth with mental health and addiction illnesses and the resulting consequences.”

Speaker, I'm pleased to affix my signature to the petition in support of this cause and to give it to page Kate to deliver to the table.

ONTARIO MUNICIPAL BOARD

Mr. Rosario Marchese: “Whereas the Ontario Municipal Board is a provincial agency composed of unelected members unaccountable to Ontarians; and

“Whereas the Ontario Municipal Board has the power to unilaterally alter local development decisions made by municipalities and their communities; and

“Whereas the city of Toronto is the largest city in Ontario; and

“Whereas the city of Toronto has a planning department composed of professional planners, an extensive legal department and 44 full-time city councillors directly elected by its citizens; and

“Whereas Toronto's city council voted overwhelmingly in February 2012 to request an exemption from the Ontario Municipal Board's jurisdiction;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the ability of the city of Toronto to handle its own urban planning and development; and

“Further, that the Ontario Municipal Board no longer have jurisdiction over the city of Toronto.”

I strongly agree with this, and I'll be signing it.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas small businesses not only employ thousands of Ontarians with well-paying jobs, they also play a vital role strengthening Ontario's economy; and

“Whereas providing tax relief to small and local businesses strengthens the economy and creates a business climate that attracts investment and helps create jobs; and

“Whereas the government has taken several other initiatives to making Ontario the most attractive place to do business in North America;

1330

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 105, Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013, introduced on September 24, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Finance.”

I fully support the petition. I affix my signature and give it to Nicholas.

SHALE BEACH

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation closed public access to Shale Beach off Highway 26 in the town of Blue Mountains suddenly and with no consultation; and

“Whereas the closure will impact fisherman, swimmers and visitors who have been frequenting the beach for generations with no problem; and

“Whereas the closure will remove one of the only wheelchair-accessible fishing locations in the area; and

“Whereas the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government won't let Ontarians enjoy anything for free anymore without implementing a new tax or a new fee;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That Premier Kathleen Wynne and the Minister of Transportation immediately restore access to Shale Beach so that residents can continue to enjoy the beach and all that it has to offer for generations to come.”

Mr. Speaker, I want to sign that petition; I agree with it.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

Ms. Sarah Campbell: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre is recognized as one of the leading primary care providers in northwestern Ontario, providing essential services to those living in not only Ignace, but across northwestern Ontario; and

"Whereas a 2010 rent increase by the government of Ontario has threatened the long-term viability of the health centre's operations; and

"Whereas the rent being charged to the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre is much higher than rent being charged to similar operations in other communities and far surpasses 'market rent' for a small community in northwestern Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately rectify the situation and ensure the long-term viability of the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre by either reducing rent, transferring ownership of the building to the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre, or through capital funds to build a new facility that better suits the community's needs."

I support this, will affix my signature and give it to page Nicholas to deliver.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Phil McNeely: "Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas small businesses not only employ thousands of Ontarians with well-paying jobs, they also play a vital role strengthening Ontario's economy; and

"Whereas providing tax relief to small and local businesses strengthens the economy and creates a business climate that attracts investment and helps create jobs; and

"Whereas the government has taken several other initiatives to making Ontario the most attractive place to do business in North America;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 105, Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013, introduced on September 24, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Finance."

I have signed this petition and I send it forward with Anal.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm privileged to present a petition on behalf of my constituents, but also the member from Simcoe-Grey, Mr. Wilson, our illustrious House leader. It reads as follows:

"Whereas we, the residents of Clearview township and neighbouring townships, oppose the wpd Canada Fairview wind project on Fairgrounds Road and all wind energy projects in Clearview township; and

"Whereas we support the petition of mayors and councillors from 80 municipalities, farm organizations, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, which petition requested that the province place an immediate moratorium on all wind projects until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health, amongst other things; and

"Whereas wpd Canada's Fairview wind project violates the OLS airspace and usability of registered aerodromes in Clearview, including Collingwood Regional Airport and Stayner field, and wpd Canada's draft renewable energy approvals reports do not recognize these impacts or the jurisdiction of the government of Canada; and

"Whereas wpd Canada is seeking final approval from the province for the Fairview wind project prior to completion of the federal Health Canada study and prior to federal actions to protect aviation safety;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario agree and accept that until the federal health study is completed and federal aeronautical zoning is in place, that it will immediately take whatever action is necessary to give full effect to a moratorium on all wind turbine development in Ontario, including all projects for which final approvals have not been given."

This applies to my riding as well. I'm pleased to sign and support it and hand it to page Ian.

VISITOR

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Just a few minutes ago, Copeland Public School, from my riding, was here, and one of the students happens to be my daughter Taj. She was here with her mom, who volunteers at the school.

MURRAY CARDIFF

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I would just like to share with the House that a notable Ontarian and an amazing member of Parliament, who served my riding of Huron in the House of Commons very well for a number of years through the 1980s, passed away today. Murray Cardiff was a gentleman and a guy who led with his heart. I'd like to share my sincere condolences with Betty, Jeff, Joan and their families.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

MANORANJANA
KANAGASABAPATHY ACT
(HAND-HELD DEVICES PENALTY), 2013

LOI MANORANJANA
KANAGASABAPATHY DE 2013
(PEINE POUR CONDUITE
AVEC APPAREIL PORTATIF)

Mr. Balkissoon moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 116, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to increase the penalty for the use of hand-held devices while driving / Projet de loi 116, Loi modifiant le Code

de la route pour augmenter la peine imposée en cas d'utilisation d'un appareil portatif lors de la conduite.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation. I recognize the member for Scarborough–Rouge River.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Bill 116 is An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to increase the penalty for the use of hand-held devices while operating a motor vehicle.

Speaker, I'd like to just take this opportunity to give a shout-out to my colleague from Durham, Mr. John O'Toole, because when I arrived in this Legislature, I remember him complaining about wireless devices and drivers using them. Maybe John was a little bit ahead of his time, but we're doing the right thing, hopefully, today.

The title of this bill is the Manoranjana Kanagasabapathy Act, named after a 52-year-old grandmother, mother, wife, sister, co-worker and friend of many, who was tragically killed in an accident involving a truck that crashed into a TTC bus on Steeles Avenue and Middlefield Road on Tuesday, August 13, 2013. She was boarding the TTC bus when the driver of a cube truck travelling in the opposite direction lost control, crossed over into oncoming traffic and crashed into the front of the bus. Manoranjana was getting on the bus when it was hit by the truck, resulting in her being pinned between the truck and the TTC bus. She had no chance of survival and died at the scene of the accident.

In addition, there were 12 others injured in the accident, including three people who were taken to Sunnybrook Hospital's trauma centre. Eyewitnesses at the scene say they believe the driver of the cube truck was talking on a cellphone at the time the accident occurred.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce her family and friends, who are here with us today. In the east gallery, we have Kandiah Kanagarajah, Sathiyasivam Kanagasabapathy, Theepan Thavarajah, Sathiyasoruby Kanagasabapathy, Kanjana Ganesan, Kandiah Panchalingam, Krishna Ravikantharaja, Harrison Lanfrank, Ruth Tonon, Robert Toth and George Toth.

Also joining us are community stakeholders who are supportive of this bill: Mr. Elliott Silverstein from the Canadian Automobile Association; and Mr. Doug DeRabbie and Matt Hiraishi from the Insurance Bureau of Canada. I just want to recognize my two staff: my executive assistant, Anna Paoletta, and my legislative intern, who did all the work on this bill, Ms. Vanessa Dupuis.

Applause.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Sure, give them a hand.

Mr. Speaker, Manoranjana, known as Ranjana by family and friends, was on her way to work at the TD Canada Trust bank headquarters after praying at a nearby Hindu temple when this tragic accident occurred. The irony of this whole story is that Ranjana escaped with her family and her mother from the daily bombings of her village in Sri Lanka about 20 years ago, only to meet

with this avoidable tragic accident here in her new homeland.

1340

The Pranavam Benevolent Services for Youth attest to the fact that Ranjana was a devout believer in God. She supported the local Hindu temples and also helped raise funds to educate needy students in Canada and Sri Lanka. Ranjana was not only involved in the community; she was the mother of two children: a son, and a daughter who had just recently given birth to Ranjana's first granddaughter. She was a devoted mother and sister, a woman of faith, as well as the primary caregiver for her elderly mother. She is described by relatives as a unifying force in their family, always planning events and get-togethers and helping out wherever she could. With these testaments from family and friends, it saddens me to know that a careless driver, distracted by the use of a cellphone, took the life of such a selfless, caring and innocent individual.

I had the opportunity to attend the memorial service of Ranjana and met her family and friends, who expressed concern about what our government can do to improve public safety as it relates to distracted drivers. The family is pleased and supportive of Bill 116 as a proposed legislative amendment to the existing Highway Traffic Act. Bill 116 aims to amend the Highway Traffic Act to increase the penalty for the use of hand-held devices while driving from the current set fine of \$155. This act would increase the penalty for this offence to a fine of not less than \$300 and not more than \$700, as well as assessing three demerit points for each offence. This is the major changes of this bill: assessing three demerit points for each offence.

A CAA member survey indicates that 85% or more respondents feel that sending text messages or emails, reading text messages or emails and/or using an app on a smart phone is unsafe while driving a vehicle. Based on recent CAA time trials, replying to a text message takes an average of 33.6 seconds. If you're driving on a residential road, this means you may have missed 85 parked cars, 36 houses or possibly five intersections. The consequences of what you may have missed and what could have occurred are far greater than any fine or assessment of demerit points for that offence. As legislators, we need to acknowledge that distracted driving is a preventable offence and that we must take proactive measures to improve community safety for our citizens.

Cam Woolley, former OPP officer and current CP24 traffic and safety issues analyst, reported that police forces say that distracted driving has now overtaken impaired driving as the number one cause of serious injury and fatal crashes. Distracted driving is now being cited by the policing community as being more dangerous than driving impaired, whereas the legislative consequences and penalties are not comparable to those of impaired driving.

Of CAA members surveyed, 99% responded that they either completely or somewhat agree that texting and driving is dangerous. Ontarians are justified in their

concerns about cellphone use while driving, since it is proven that drivers who text are 23 times more likely to be in an accident and talking on the phone increases the risk of an accident by up to four times. Despite these terrifying statistics demonstrating the greater likelihood of an accident from distracted driving, 72% of Ontario teens admit to texting or talking while behind the wheel of a vehicle.

Speaker, the current law is not sufficient, and we need to do more for public safety. There have been 235,000 charges laid in the last three years, which does not account for those who do not get caught. In 2010, there were 7,733 collisions on OPP-patrolled roads where the driver was deemed to be inattentive or distracted, resulting in 35 deaths, 1,040 injuries and considerable property damage.

OPP Constable Rob Charpentier expressed his support for this bill in a letter. He has personally issued approximately 90 tickets this year for illegal use of hand-held devices and supports demerit points to be included for this offence as a result of "the potential danger it poses relative to some other offences that do carry demerit points."

Staff Sergeant Dave Rydzik of the Toronto Police Service, 42 division, in my riding of Scarborough–Rouge River, confirmed: "Toronto Police–Traffic Services has found that when demerit points were added to the seat belt law, there was a dramatic rise in compliance rates over time to where we are today, which is an incredible 95 per cent."

This demonstrates that with the introduction of demerit points to seat belt legislation, there was a noticeable increase in compliance. This bill, Bill 116, can produce the same effect for distracted driving.

Ontario is only one of a few provinces in Canada where distracted driving offences are not assessed demerit points. There is strong support for this bill from various stakeholders: members of the public, who sent e-mails to my office and also called in on radio interviews I did earlier this month; the Canadian Automobile Association, which provided many of the statistics mentioned; and the Insurance Bureau of Canada, whose vice-president states that imposing demerit points will improve drivers' behaviour with respect to the use of hand-held devices while driving.

The current legislation, which fines distracted drivers \$155 for an offence, has not produced the desired safety on our roads. We have all witnessed, despite the current legislation and the ban on the use of hand-held devices while driving, someone talking or texting while driving or sitting at a stoplight.

Ranjana is only one of many victims killed or seriously injured by a distracted driver using wireless electronic devices. She is one too many. We must act now to make our roads safer for all Ontarians and implement this bill in an effort to prevent these tragedies from happening again in the future.

We, as representatives of the citizens of Ontario, need to support the adoption of Bill 116 into law, in an effort

to encourage safety and focused driving that will help save innocent lives. We must act now and support Bill 116 to increase the penalty for these offences to a fine not less than \$300 and not more than \$700 and, most importantly, assess three demerit points for each offence.

In closing, I ask all members of the Legislature to support this bill with increased penalties, especially adding demerit points for the illegal use of hand-held devices, in an effort to help save the lives of the innocent people who are being killed or injured by distracted drivers.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for allowing me, and I just want to thank the family for being here with us and our stakeholders. Thanks very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much to my friend the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for bringing forward this important piece of legislation, which I will be supporting, and proudly supporting. To the family of Manoranjana Kanagasabapathy, I thank you for your courage in bringing your story to the floor of this assembly.

Earlier this summer, one of my constituents, Rick Levesque, reached out to me. He started a petition—a province-wide campaign—to bring demerit points into the scenario if someone is caught texting or using their phone and driving, because he found, as we all have, that distracted driving legislation has not gone far enough and is abused. I promised him that I would bring this to the floor of the assembly, which I did. The first week we were back, I brought forward his petition, and I spoke with the minister, and since, I have spoken with Mr. Balkissoon.

1350

It obviously was our intent when we first brought forward legislation in this House on distracted driving—and I know my colleague Mr. O'Toole from Durham was an early champion on this, and I'm very proud to sit beside him in this assembly. But I think what we perhaps did early on is we didn't have the appropriate oversight mechanism or perhaps we were short-sighted with respect to adding demerit points when it does come to distracted driving. I think it was a good point that was brought up then, and it is in this bill.

One thing I have seen is the amount of support that this initiative has brought to bear from a variety of people. The city of Ottawa is now putting forward a motion. The chief of police in Ottawa and the police association in Ottawa have also said that this is needed.

I'm pleased to see that the IBC is here, the Insurance Bureau of Canada. Doug DeRabbie and Matt Hiraishi are here today to support this legislation, as is my friend Elliott Silverstein from the CAA. I would be remiss not to mention that the Trillium auto dealers and Frank Notte have also expressed their support for adding demerit points.

If folks think the public isn't supportive, I can tell you that the online polls I've seen and the call-in shows,

particularly CFRA in Ottawa, my local radio station, have been overwhelmingly supportive.

So you know something, Speaker? I think today we have an opportunity to support this legislation in honour of someone who passed too young from distracted driving, and we can do it together. I'm very proud to be here. I would also like to let the family know that on Tuesday, November 5, myself, Mr. Balkissoon and our transportation critic, Jeff Yurek, will be hosting a press conference to pursue this matter further, to talk about the urgency of this, because things have changed over the years. As I said, I think we understand that there was oversight in the original law.

I want to say thank you once again for the opportunity to debate this, and stand on the record to say I support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: On behalf of New Democrats, I want to express our sympathy and condolences to the Kanagasabapathy family. It's never easy when you lose a family member and it doesn't matter the circumstances, but it happens to be this circumstance that caused that death.

I think this is a good bill. The member from Scarborough-Rouge River has got it right, and I think he's going to receive the support of everyone, which hopefully will bring forth a bill in a timely fashion to deal with this particular problem.

There was a time when I resisted the use of a cellular phone, resisted and did not use it, deliberately, because I felt it would be a serious intrusion in my life, that it would become an extension of my work, that it would bring my work wherever I was, whether it was here or outside of this place or in my home. I didn't want anything to do with that. You can only resist it for so long until you become taken by it, overwhelmed by it. It's almost sad and depressing to see members of this Legislature, our children and everybody else we know who are addicted to these phones and have them attached to their bodies every single moment of their lives. It's depressing. Eventually there will be chips in our brains, and who knows what else will happen with technology?

This is something that has taken over our lives. Once it takes over your life, you believe you are now entitled to the use of it in whatever form. So now that you are in your own car, you feel empowered and entitled to use that apparatus because you think you can, because you think that you are godly-like, because you think you're better than most, because you think you can text and dial a phone better than most and that nothing will ever happen because you are so much more capable than everybody else.

It's all a lie. So this bill is timely, because we have to deal with the problems that it has brought.

Similarly with seat belts, a long, long time ago—boy, did I resist the use of seat belts, for a variety of reasons, most of which was that it ruined my jackets and my shirts and my ties. But also because I felt entitled to say, in my own car, "I don't want to do this and I don't need to do

it." Until you get caught by the police—and that's your first lesson, because you've got to pay a penalty and there are demerit points. Then you start reluctantly saying, "Damn, I have to obey the law." It's a shame that you have to be caught before you do the right thing.

There is a sense of this entitlement and a sense of intrusion by the law into a private space that is ultimately incorrect, because what we're doing does endanger people's lives. We have to restrain that sense of entitlement, that sense of freedom the people feel they need to have in a way that—without a fine and without demerit points, people will continue to do whatever they think is right even though it brings about potential dangers.

So it's a good bill. Member from Scarborough-Rouge River, I'm convinced your government will soon take it over as their bill, possibly make some additions or changes, and I would be one happy member to support it when it does happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be sharing my time with the members from Scarborough-Agincourt and Mississauga East-Cooksville.

I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough-Rouge River for bringing forward this very important piece of legislation. I know he feels very passionately about it.

I'm very pleased to speak today in support of Bill 116, the Manoranjana Kanagasabapathy Act, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to increase the penalty for using hand-held devices while driving.

Like so many people, my father taught me to drive when I was a teenager. While I've long since passed my driving exam and taught my teenagers how to drive, at the age of 54, my dad still gives me driving tips. One thing he always says to me repeatedly is, "A green light is not a guarantee of immortality." What he means is that you need to be aware of all those things that are happening around you when you're in a car. That's what this bill is about.

While we have legislation to curb distracted driving, it is clear we need to do more. Whether driving on the 401 in Toronto, the Queensway in Ottawa, or a street in my riding, I'm troubled by the number of drivers who are either on a cellphone or looking down at their smartphone on their lap. We all recognize and are concerned by the distracted driver.

A recent study noted that if you're driving at 55 miles per hour and you take your eyes off the road, the average person will drive the length of a football field. So think of that: driving with your head down for the length of a football field. It's not only dangerous for you, but it's dangerous to people around you. Mr. Speaker, we see today the consequence that that can have on a family.

This bill is being put forward to further protect us and our family from distracted drivers. Bill 116 will increase the penalty for driving a vehicle while using a hand-held device to a maximum of \$700, and also apply three demerit points.

A number of my constituents have contacted me and asked me to support this legislation. I'd like to take a minute to read you the comments of one constituent, Ms. Indra Thind. She writes:

"I would like to bring your attention to the issue of distracted drivers.

"Whether I drive or am out for a walk, which is every day, I have seen someone texting or talking on a cell-phone every time.

"I have also had to take sudden, evasive actions because someone was talking on a cellphone and didn't notice me while I was walking across a crosswalk.

"Clearly, this is a very serious threat to public safety.

"I put this down to the fact that these people fear no consequences simply because the likelihood of being caught is slim to none.

"Coupled with that, the fines are very light even in the unlikely event someone is caught.

"I think that demerits must become an added consequence for distracted driving."

I'd like to thank her for her comments.

Additionally, I have a letter from Mayor Watson, the mayor of Ottawa. Mayor Watson recently wrote to the Premier asking her to make changes to the Highway Traffic Act. This letter was sent after city council passed Councillor Tierney's motion seeking an amendment to the Ontario Highway Traffic Act to include demerit points for those caught driving while using a cellphone.

Demerit points and increased fines provide a consequence that will underline the seriousness of the offence and the risk to public safety.

1400

Driving is something that many of us do every day and have been doing for years. Eventually, we view it as routine, and we forget about the physics. We forget that we are driving a one-tonne piece of steel and plastic and whatever, all while navigating roads and responding to other drivers and obstacles around us.

As witnessed every day in the province, the dangers of distracted driving are real. According to the OPP, distracted driving is cited as a causal factor in 30% to 50% of traffic collisions but is probably much more, due to under-reporting.

We often forget that driving is a tremendous responsibility, Mr. Speaker. As I said, by raising the fines and the penalties, we will further reduce the risk to people from distracted drivers. It does more than just raise awareness; it provides a consequence.

This bill will further protect our families and our friends. Today, on behalf of the residents of Ottawa South, I encourage all the members of this Legislature to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm pleased today to rise and offer my thoughts on Bill 116, the Hand-Held Devices Penalty Act. I'd like to commend my colleague from Scarborough-Rouge River for taking on this important issue and bringing this legislation to the floor. Road safety is a

vital and noble endeavour, and this bill institutes one more measure that will help minimize risks on the road and ultimately save lives.

To begin, I want to acknowledge that driving is a fairly universal activity. There are over nine million licensed drivers in the province. When we get behind the wheel, we accept that there are certain risks associated with driving. Poor weather conditions, the driving habits of others, and substandard road conditions all pose risks to our safety. We accept these risks in return for the convenience of driving. However, to minimize these risks, it's important, when we get behind the wheel and for the entire time that we're driving, that our full attention is on the task.

Unfortunately, the proliferation of cellphones in the past 15 years has provided a tempting distraction for the time we spend behind the wheel. Texting and driving increases the probability of getting in an accident by 23 times—that's right, 23 times. In fact, using hand-held devices while behind the wheel has become the primary public road safety concern in Canada, surpassing drunk driving for the first time.

Actually, comparing distracted driving to drunk driving highlights some interesting parallels. A couple of generations ago, drinking and driving was commonplace. There was a culture of acceptance surrounding this practice. However, we all know that alcohol impairs judgment and increases the risk of accidents. At the time, legislation to deter this practice was enacted, and a number of groups like MADD sprung up to educate people on the dangers of drinking and driving. Now our young people, as a general group, are aware of the dangers of drinking and driving and make smart decisions when faced with those options.

So now this is what we must do: We must change the cultural attitude towards distracted driving. Right now, with the current fine of \$155, many people who do get caught consider that as a cost of doing business. That's why this bill takes an important step forward. Demerit points are a more effective deterrent—a deterrent that, as people become more aware of it and new drivers grow up with it, will permeate throughout our system and direct the collective attitude towards distracted driving.

I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association, who have partnered with Southland Insurance and the Ontario Brain Injury Association to establish the Drive Only.... Never Text campaign.

I'd also like to acknowledge the Insurance Bureau of Canada, CAA, TADA, and the family that's here today, who lost a loved one. Thank you for bringing your story forward. We hope this legislation will help prevent further problems in our society.

I look forward to working together with the family, the whole Legislature and the groups I mentioned earlier. Together, we can end texting and driving.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I would like to join my colleagues across the House and thank the member for

Scarborough–Rouge River for bringing forward this important bill, and thank interested parties on both sides, as well as the affected family of one of these tragic incidents, for coming today.

The Ontario NDP supports this bill as a means of increasing safety on our roads. There were 51,770 drivers who were charged with distracted driving in Ontario this past year. That's a staggering number of people who have been charged with distracted driving in just one year, despite the legislation that we have in place that's supposed to curtail this kind of behaviour. According to the Ontario Provincial Police, 65 people have been killed this year in distracted driving-related collisions, and, as mentioned by the previous speaker, that is, of course, ahead of the fatalities related to impaired driving.

We all know that distracted driving and using one's cellphone, whether talking on the phone or trying to sneak in a quick text here or there while driving, is very dangerous, and it has some real consequences. It has some very high costs, and those costs are both human and economic.

In terms of the human costs, CAA says that drivers engaged in text messaging are 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash or a near crash. According to the government of Canada, the economic losses caused by traffic collision-related health care costs and lost productivity are at least \$10 billion, or 1% of Canada's GDP. I think the part that is most frustrating for so many people—and my colleague from Trinity–Spadina did a great job talking about what goes through people's minds and what may possibly lead them to engage in this kind of risky behaviour: because people think they're in control, they're capable, they're in their own space. All these things are going through people's minds. They're in a rush, they're really busy, they've got a lot of work commitments and obligations, but it really is needless.

There are always other options. There's the option to pull over on the side of the road. More and more, with this new technology, the technology that puts us into these situations where we may feel like we've got our cellphones kind of attached to our ears or attached to our hands—there are Bluetooth devices, and these are becoming more and more common. You see a lot of people walking around with them. We also have more and more smartphones, like the BlackBerry, which is made right here in Ontario, that have dictation possibilities. Also, there's a lot more Bluetooth integration in cars. I know my vehicle has that, and it's great because it will actually read me my text messages—even the emoticons and everything. So, really, there's no reason not to do these other things. Of course, the easiest thing to do is just to pull over on the side of the road.

Given the fact that there were over 51,000, almost 52,000, drivers charged with distracted driving last year, I think that's a pretty clear indication that our current penalties are not working. So I, for one, welcome this increase in penalty, both financially and also in terms of the thing that can always hit people the hardest, which is those demerit points, which are at a premium.

I am happy to support this, and I thank the member for bringing it forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise today to support my colleague and my neighbour from Scarborough–Rouge River for bringing this very important legislation to the House. I also want to thank him for his leadership, for listening to his community and actively serving our community so well in Scarborough–Rouge River.

Today, Bill 116 is before us because, folks, this would not have been an issue 10 years ago. Ironically, yesterday our House unanimously supported the Minister of Consumer Services on the wireless act. Isn't it ironic that yesterday we were here, collectively as a House, protecting consumers using wireless devices across Ontario, and today we now have a private member's bill to try to address the safety of the wireless devices we're using?

The member from Rouge River spoke so eloquently about the distraction and the consequences, but more importantly we need to be very mindful of what our role here is as a member of this Parliament.

We heard the member from Rouge River very eloquently talking about the OPP and the many lives that have been lost. But the more important piece here is that the proposed Bill 116, if passed, is about saving lives, saving families from the tragedy we just heard this afternoon. But more importantly, it's also a deterrent for many young people who have been distracted by using these electronic devices while driving. Something has to be changed.

The member opposite from Elgin–Middlesex–London spoke earlier with respect to distraction. We need to change attitude. We need to change people's mindset about these electronic devices because we know that one family losing a loved one is one too many.

As of August this year, 47 out of 177 fatalities on OPP-patrolled roads were caused by distracted drivers. The minister responsible for seniors just mentioned to me that 65,000 Ontarians have been caught with an electronic device, but how many more have not been caught and have what we call near-miss accidents, right? This is really important data we have to deal with.

1410

Everyone is talking about this, our concern about electronic devices while driving, but more importantly, we now have an opportunity as members of this provincial Parliament to address the safety of every Ontarian, because nobody in this House wants to go through what we just heard this afternoon. It is our responsibility. We're collectively responsible to do the right thing, not only supporting the member from Scarborough–Rouge River. If the Minister of Transportation can come up with further strengthening of the bill, the Highway Traffic Act, it's the right thing to do.

Thank you very much for this opportunity. I look forward to more conversation about Bill 116.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to also extend my congratulations to the member from Scarborough—Rouge River, Mr. Balkissoon, and thank him for the interest here, as well as thanking the family who have lent their tragedy to encouraging people to support the bill.

I would say that I have a long history in this file. Seventeen years ago I introduced a bill prohibiting the use of handheld devices, cellphones. At that time, it was mostly speaking to people on the phone. Now texting is an even worse problem because you're looking at the keyboard and the keys and not at the road.

I think the remarks made here today helped to educate the public and, I would say more importantly—the young people in Ontario are probably the biggest offenders. I look at it every day. I commute a lot, and I find that driver distraction is increasing. Even with the cars themselves, the on-board digital dashboard today certainly needs to improve. It needs to be completely voice-interactive to really resolve this issue. So I do support the bill and I know our caucus is in support as well.

I recall that at the time that I was working on this, Dr. Donald Redelmeier and Dr. Robert Tibshirani actually issued a report in 1997 which tied the relationship, in a study, to driver distraction and the probability of accident. We know now from studies that you're 23 times more likely to be involved in an accident if you're texting or talking on a cellphone. So I think there's clear evidence here that by doing the right thing here, all of us can make this the law and potentially save lives. That was the case 16 or 17 years ago. I introduced the bill at least six times before it finally got included in one of the current government's bills. I think it was in 2009 that the thing actually got implemented. At that time—even this year, I think it's 52,000; 17,000 tickets have been laid in Toronto.

The thing is now, with the vehicles, you can't tell because of tinted windows and such. How do they enforce this? The police need to have an education program. In fact, there are methodologies now to actually disconnect the phones remotely. I think they could time them out and not allow it to happen unless the car is in park, where you can't interact with the on-board navigation unless the car is in park, unless, of course, you have an attached device which isn't tied in to the technology of the car.

So there's a lot that can be done by the vehicle manufacturers, but again, I want to commend the member from Scarborough—Rouge River. We all need to be part of the education of the public here. I certainly lend my voice and will be supporting the bill. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 116. I want to congratulate the originator of the bill, Mr. Balkissoon, the member for Scarborough—Rouge River. This is good legislation. It makes me proud to stand here today and sense that there's tripartite consensus and, I think, unani-

mous consensus that this is a piece of law that we should move forward with.

I also want to offer my condolences to the family. I can't imagine the pain and the heartache that you've suffered, coming out of a tragedy like this. We see it so often, where the greatest tribute to one of our friends or family members is to inform people about their story. I think you should be also very proud of yourselves for being strong enough to share this issue and voice your concerns with your community and your elected representatives to make this happen. It's a wonderful tribute to your loved one, and one that, again, I'm very proud to stand and support. It's not very often in this House that we see unanimous consent, and this is really the best work we can do in here.

I'm really thrilled to hear some of the great comments, particularly from the member from Durham, who touched on the technological aspects. The prevalence of technology in cellphones and smartphones in our vehicles is what we are talking about today. It isn't simply text messages, and it isn't simply telephone calls; it's everything. We do everything on these phones these days. We do our banking, we use it as our guide, our map, we make reservations to restaurants, and they happen almost without thought.

The message, in terms of the increased fines and penalties, is the message we need to send, similar to the days when not wearing your seat belt was accepted practice. That changed. Drinking and driving, as has been expressed here, is no longer acceptable. Thankfully, I'm of a generation when it was not something you did. Our friends understood—my generation understood—that you just didn't get into a vehicle with someone who had been drinking. That has changed over time, and this is the start of this in Ontario. Again, my hope is that, not only through the increased fines, we send a signal to the general public that it's a behaviour that's unacceptable while driving a vehicle.

But it sends a signal to manufacturers that they have to give us a safer product. Again, the ability of Bluetooth technology to connect with our cellphones—that connectivity—is an enabling mechanism; it's an enabling piece of technology. They have to give us a better piece of technology. Maybe, with increased public awareness, that public demand on manufacturers saying, "Give us something safer; give us something that still helps us, that we can interact with"—voice technology, as the member from Durham has talked about.

I talk to my phone. It's one of my best friends. It tells me where I'm going and when to wake up in the morning and my agenda. We have a relationship, me and Siri.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Whoa.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Well, it's a functional relationship, but it's one we certainly all know about now. We're all glued to our phones every day. They help guide us in our jobs. It's one that we can ensure that the technology that's built into our vehicles is safe and also ensures that we still get service.

I want to commend the member again for this piece of legislation. It's good public policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I rise today to speak to this very worthy bill, introduced by my colleague, MPP Balkissoon. I'd like to begin by welcoming the family of Manoranjana Kanagasabapathy, whom I met earlier when MPP Balkissoon first introduced the bill. Welcome.

I would also like to welcome my good friend Doug DeRabbie and Matt Hiraishi, from the Insurance Bureau of Canada, as well as Elliott Silverstein, from the CAA. Thank you so much for coming. Your coming here means a lot to us.

Speaker, there's nothing we can do to bring back Manoranjana—or Ranjana, as she was called by the family—but we can do something to ensure that her death was not in vain, and that is what this bill is about. What this bill does is give teeth to a law.

It's against the law to speak on the phone or text or use a cellphone in any form or fashion while we drive. But the challenge is that there isn't enough of a penalty for doing so. So what we find is that too many people still use a cellphone while they're driving. What this will do—increasing the penalty from \$150 to \$300 to \$700 and, more importantly, adding three demerit points if caught doing so—is give teeth to the law.

Through this new act, should this bill pass, I want the family to know that Ranjana will live forever.

Speaker, we have evidence that when we add teeth to a law in this fashion, it works. Other speakers have given us the example of the seat belt. That's a great example. When it was first introduced, not a lot of people would wear the seat belt. Today, I think it's almost 100% compliance. That is what we are trying to do here today. That is what this bill is about.

1420

Often people talk about—for instance, they say Ranjana's death was an accident. I'm going to disagree. I don't have the facts, and I don't want to focus on a particular case, because I don't know all of the details. But the fact is, if somebody takes a light and drops it, a lit match, on dry leaves and they catch fire, that's not an accident; that is negligence. In the same way, we know that if you're going to use the cellphone and drive, it is going to increase the probability of an accident by 23 times. So when we do that, we don't cause accidents; what we are doing is negligence.

That is why I am so supportive of adding more punitive measures, because, really, we all know we ought not to be texting or speaking on the phone while we drive, but we still do it. When something goes wrong, to call it an accident—in my view, that was gross negligence, because we knew that by doing that, there was a high probability, 23 more times, that we could end up in an accident.

That is why I thank the member for Scarborough–Rouge River for bringing this very important bill forward. As soon as I heard that he was going to do it, I did go the day that he had his press conference, because I think this is a very important bill. I have a 15-year-old

daughter. She is already talking to me about getting her driver's licence. I can tell you, this child, like many children who are 15, uses the cellphone constantly. She's constantly texting. As a mother, I'm going to feel much, much safer to know that if she were to text and drive—as in when she gets to drive, and I'm going to delay that for as long as I can—there will be penalties.

You know, this is what being an MPP is all about. This is the crux of what we do: legislating to make the province a better place. This really is the core of our job. On a day like this, it is very satisfying, very fulfilling, to be an MPP, to make this a province a better place to live in, particularly when all MPPs, all sides of the House, agree and support this very, very worthy bill. Well done. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to rise today in support of the member for Scarborough–Rouge River's bill, Bill 116.

To the family, I would offer the recognition of your courage to come forward. My wish for you today is that you will find some comfort in today's proceedings. One life is one too many.

There are a number of things that people have chosen to speak about in this bill, and I've chosen a couple. One of them is the issue around enforcement. I think this is probably one of the reasons why people are willing to take the risk, because it's unlikely that it will be enforced. You're zipping along the road or you come to a traffic light and you see the number of people who are distracted by their cellphones or other technology like that. So if people get away with something and they didn't cause an accident, it feels like it's a risk that you want to take.

Part of that, too, comes from the fact that thousands of people every day, certainly in the greater Toronto area, sit on all the various highways coming into the city, and sit and sit. It's that boredom, that notion that you're going to be sitting there for a few more minutes, you're not moving, that I think contributes to the number of people willing to take the risk.

That's where I think a private member's bill such as the one we have before us today and the consequent promotion that I think will accompany this bill, the recognition of CAA and the Insurance Bureau, the more people that come together to recognize the fact that there are just too many people—well, I would say one is too many—who are willing to take the risk. They know that enforcement is difficult. They get bored or frustrated sitting in their cars.

The importance here is that people, as a result of this bill, should not feel there's a chance that, even though the fines are greater, they're willing to take the risk. The risk is not appropriate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We now return to the member for Scarborough–Rouge River for his two-minute reply.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I really want to thank my colleagues from Nepean–Carleton, Trinity–Spadina, Ottawa

South, Elgin—Middlesex—London, Kenora—Rainy River, Scarborough—Agincourt, Durham, Essex, Mississauga East—Cooksville and York—Simcoe for all their comments and showing great support for this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to read a piece of a letter I received from the deputy commissioner of the OPP for Traffic Safety and Operational Support: “I have read your private member’s Bill 116 ... and do support some changes to the current distracted driving regulations. As you know, the Ontario Provincial Police, along with all Canadian police agencies, have targeted what we have identified as the big four causes of fatal motor vehicle collisions. These are impaired driving, distracted driving, non-use of seat belts and aggressive driving.”

He also says, “We work on a constant basis with the Ministry of Transportation and lobby to get regular changes to the Highway Traffic Act.... The issue of demerit points attached to a distracted driving charge is only one of these.”

I just want to say thank you to the deputy commissioner for getting in touch with my office.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Ottawa South reminded me of something, because he talked about his dad teaching him to drive. I remember when my three children went for their driver’s licence, and I did advise them that a vehicle can kill and therefore you have to learn to handle it with care because it is as dangerous as any weapon that is available. I think we need to adopt the same thing for a cellphone. It is something you are attached to, something you need, but it can kill. It is a dangerous weapon, so you have to be responsible when you use it in a vehicle.

I just want to reply to my colleague from Durham, because he did say that there’s technology available today to disable the device while it’s moving, and that’s absolutely true. The problem that somebody posed to me on a talk show is, “What happens if I’m a passenger? I’m not driving, so I should be allowed to use my device.” That’s the challenge we, as legislators, will face as this goes forward, because we will have to differentiate between a driver and a passenger, and it’s most difficult.

One of my colleagues—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. I’m sorry, but the time has ended for your private member’s bill.

HAWKINS GIGNAC ACT (CARBON MONOXIDE SAFETY), 2013

LOI HAWKINS GIGNAC DE 2013 (PROTECTION CONTRE LE MONOXYDE DE CARBONE)

Mr. Hardeman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 77, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 to provide safety requirements related to the presence of unsafe levels of carbon monoxide on premises / Projet de loi 77, Loi modifiant la

Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l’incendie pour prévoir des exigences en matière de protection contre la présence, dans des lieux, de niveaux dangereux de monoxyde de carbone.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I’m pleased to rise to once again speak to the Hawkins Gignac Act. This bill would save lives and prevent tragedies by requiring carbon monoxide detectors in Ontario homes.

1430

First, I want to recognize and thank those who are in the gallery today to support this issue. Matt Hiraishi and Doug DeRabbie are here from the Insurance Bureau of Canada. The Insurance Bureau of Canada has been very helpful in getting the message this far. We also have the 1st Ingersoll Girl Guides, who are here to help raise awareness for the act. Also, John Gignac, founder of the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation for CO Education, is here in attendance.

The Hawkins-Gignac Foundation works to increase awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide and helps purchase and distribute detectors to fire departments across the country. I’ve worked closely with John over the past five years and would like to thank him for his support of this bill and for all his efforts to raise awareness on the issue. Thank you, John.

John created a foundation after his niece Laurie Hawkins and her young family were poisoned by carbon monoxide after the exhaust of their gas fireplace was blocked, filling their home with poisonous gas. Sadly, our community lost Laurie and Richard Hawkins and their two children, 14-year-old Cassandra and 12-year-old Jordan, in this tragedy. This tragic event may have been prevented if they had had a functioning carbon monoxide detector.

Laurie, a community relations officer with the OPP, was a valued member of our community, particularly through her role with local schools, teaching the VIP program—values, influences and peers. Laurie’s profound impact on the children was recognized when the Thames Valley District School Board named a new school in Ingersoll in her memory.

Richard Hawkins was an accomplished hockey player and continued to show his passion for the game as a coach for the local hockey team. He was both a dedicated father and an active member of the community.

Cassandra was a grade 9 student. She was a member of the justice league and enjoyed figure skating and swimming.

Jordan, just 12, was working as a local paper boy. He played hockey and loved all outdoor activities, including fishing and camping.

For weeks prior to the family falling ill, they thought they had come down with the flu. That is what makes carbon monoxide so dangerous, Mr. Speaker. It is colourless, odourless and has no taste. As a result, the carbon monoxide’s early symptoms were nearly impos-

sible to detect. The symptoms can include headaches, fatigue and dizziness, all similar to the flu. The family had no idea they were suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning.

The gas can be produced by any fuel-burning appliance. These are potential sources present in most homes: water heaters, furnaces, gas stoves, space heaters, and even our garages where we warm up our cars in the winter. Without a carbon monoxide detector, there is no way of knowing if you are at risk.

Sadly, these tragedies are still occurring. Two months ago, an elderly couple in Burk's Falls was found unconscious in their home due to carbon monoxide poisoning and were rushed to the hospital. Luckily the woman was saved, but the man perished. The couple did not have a CO detector in their home.

Due to the countless tragedies like this one, I once again stand before this Legislature to ask for support for the Hawkins Gignac Act. I first introduced this bill in 2008, shortly after the tragic loss of the Hawkins family. The bill passed second reading and was referred to the committee, but prorogation stopped the bill from proceeding further. In fact, I reintroduced the Hawkins Gignac Act three more times, only to see it die on the order paper because of prorogation each time.

Since the initial introduction of the Hawkins Gignac Act in 2008, I have worked closely with many different people and organizations about the need for carbon monoxide detectors, and I want to thank everyone who shared their thoughts and suggestions on the bill. All this work has led to today. Today, I ask for support to ensure that the Hawkins Gignac Act passes not only second reading, but through the committee and third reading as well.

This bill is long overdue, Mr. Speaker. Currently, the law surrounding carbon monoxide detectors is almost non-existent. CO alarms are only required in homes built after August 2001. This provision does not allow for continued enforcement by fire departments or even require that a detector be functioning properly after initial inspection. The Hawkins Gignac Act will allow the government to replicate existing laws governing smoke alarms for carbon monoxide detectors.

I believe detectors are essential in all homes with fuel-burning appliances or attached garages. CO detectors are a simple solution to a devastating problem.

In 2009, Dr. Andrew McCallum, the chief coroner of Ontario at the time, recommended that carbon monoxide detectors be made mandatory on every level of all homes. Carbon monoxide detectors save lives. The Ontario fire marshal agrees. During Fire Prevention Week earlier this month, the Ontario fire marshal spoke to the importance of CO detectors: "Carbon monoxide alarms are critical life safety devices. They detect the presence of smoke and deadly gas and provide those precious seconds for occupants to escape. Everyone needs to have one in their home." The detectors themselves range in price but are available for \$20 to \$25, a small price to pay to save a life.

The people of Ontario have embraced the 1997 law requiring smoke detectors on every level of their homes. I truly hope that the people recognize the need for similar provision for carbon monoxide detectors. While there have been many preventable CO-related tragedies since the first introduction of this bill in 2008, I have also received many letters from a number of people whose lives were saved by carbon monoxide detectors.

In fact, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has even brought to my attention the added benefit of this bill for Ontario firefighters and medical personnel. Imagine that a 911 call comes in because someone is unconscious. When the emergency personnel arrive, they have no reason to suspect carbon monoxide poisoning without the alarm from a functioning CO detector. What seems like purely a safety issue for the homeowner can easily put Ontario's first responders in harm's way. A carbon monoxide detector may not only save the life of the homeowner, but it could also protect our emergency personnel.

Thankfully, many municipalities in the province, including South West Oxford and Ingersoll in my riding of Oxford, have passed local bylaws requiring carbon monoxide detectors in homes with fuel-burning appliances or an attached garage. These municipal bylaws have resulted in countless stories from families who have been saved because of the installation of a carbon monoxide alarm.

Just last month, a downtown Hamilton triplex was evacuated after high levels of carbon monoxide were detected. Luckily, no one was injured. Without the CO detector in place, the results could have been tragic.

The municipalities are taking a step in the right direction, but a handful of municipalities are not enough. Do we only want Ontario families to have protection from carbon monoxide if they live in certain towns? Even with the efforts of these municipalities, over 250 Ontarians have perished from carbon monoxide poisoning in the last 15 years, excluding suicides. I commend these municipalities for their work, but it is apparent that those bylaws don't replace a provincial law. All Ontario families should be protected against the dangers of carbon monoxide.

But each of these municipal bylaws places different requirements on landlords and homeowners. The different rules in different municipalities create unnecessary red tape and confusion. Our goal should be to create one law that's easy to understand and to comply with. The easier it is to protect Ontarians, the better.

This is why we need to move forward with the Hawkins Gignac Act. Despite the increasing awareness stemming from these tragedies and from the work of groups like the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation and the Insurance Bureau of Canada, this issue is not going away.

I mentioned the Girl Guides earlier. This past March, a Girl Guides troop from Ingersoll, who are in the gallery today, experienced their own carbon monoxide scare. While camping for the weekend in a cabin near Princeton, Ontario, the group evacuated the cabin after the

carbon monoxide alarm went off. It turns out that the stove had a faulty pilot light, causing carbon monoxide to seep into the cabin. Luckily, no one was hurt.

Troop leader Amy Boddy was so moved by the experience that she wrote to me saying, "We tested the CO detector when we arrived at the cabin, but without it having been there, I'm confident we would not have survived the weekend." I am happy that they are all safe and want to thank them for attending today.

The potential for more of these tragedies continues to rise as Ontarians become more concerned with the environment and rising energy prices. Because of these reasons, creating an airtight home is becoming more common. Replacing drafty windows may reduce heating costs, but it can also increase the levels of carbon monoxide in the home. Again, since carbon monoxide can't be detected without a functioning alarm, it is clear that these tragedies will continue to occur without the passage of the proper legislation.

In fact, the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs has written that, "Hundreds of Canadians are hospitalized every year from carbon monoxide poisoning, many of whom are permanently disabled. Everyone is at risk—88% of all homes have something that poses a carbon monoxide threat."

1440

It's apparent that carbon monoxide is an urgent issue that needs to be dealt with. The solution was described well by the leading injury prevention association in Canada, Parachute, when they wrote, "Every Ontario family deserves to be safe in their home. Carbon monoxide alarms are an easy solution and can prevent tragic outcomes."

The worst part of the tragedy caused by carbon monoxide exposure is that these tragedies are preventable. I'm pleased to say that, over the past five years, Ontarians have become more aware of the need for carbon monoxide detectors in their homes and have installed detectors in many cases. But there are still far too many people at risk. I want to encourage everyone who is listening today, here and at home, not to wait for the legislation to pass but to make sure that they and their loved ones have carbon monoxide detectors in their homes as soon as possible.

Working together, this Legislature can prevent more unnecessary carbon-monoxide-related tragedies. With your support for the Hawkins Gignac Act, we can raise awareness of the issue, move this bill forward to committee and help ensure its passage to protect Ontario families from the dangers of carbon monoxide.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to bring the bill forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I would like to start by thanking the member for Oxford for taking this initiative, not just this time but also the three previous times that he has brought this bill forward to the House. New Democrats have been proud to support his bill, will be

supporting his bill today, and have done so each and every time that he has brought this bill forward in its previous incarnations.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is the number one cause of accidental deaths in North America. These deaths could be avoided by ensuring that all homes are equipped with carbon monoxide functioning alarms, provided that they have, of course, a carbon monoxide source. The bill would require a carbon monoxide detector to be put in all homes with a fuel-burning appliance such as a furnace or a gas stove, or even homes that have an attached garage.

I think we've generally agreed how important it is to have carbon monoxide detectors in our homes, but I wanted to talk about what we've currently got in Ontario right now. Right now in Ontario, every city has the legislative authority over carbon monoxide detectors, and many do have bylaws that mandate their use. Some examples across our province are Sudbury, Thunder Bay, North Bay and Sault Ste. Marie. However, it is a patchwork system, and provincial action should be taken to ensure that there is some uniformity right across the province.

I know that in a large part of my riding of Kenora-Rainy River, we have a lot of unincorporated areas, so even if theoretically all the municipalities in my riding were to adopt a bylaw, that still leaves many people, including myself, who would not be covered by this kind of a system. So it's important to have a blanket across the province. As I said, it's important for consistency, it's important for uniformity and also, more importantly, it raises the profile of this issue. It makes it front and centre in people's minds, because it makes it the law of the land.

So this is a very simple, yet a very important, bill and I am pleased to support it. I know that my fellow New Democrats are also pleased to support it, and I want to leave a little bit of time on the clock for them to participate in this debate.

I again want to thank the member from Oxford for bringing this bill forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I rise today with great pleasure to support the bill put forward by the member from Oxford. He is to be applauded for his bill. There's little doubt that it should be passed. This legislation would ultimately save lives; I agree with him. I spoke in favour of this bill last spring, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to do it again at second reading debate. I know this bill comes from a desire to raise awareness, because that's what private members' bills do, but also I know it comes from a caring for his community of Oxford and for people across Ontario. So I appreciate that he's doing it.

I think it's also important that it's an attempt to avoid tragedies that can be prevented. I can understand that. For those of you who may have been in this Legislature long enough to remember, when I first arrived back in 2003, I put forward three private member's bills in my efforts to bring forward an issue I cared about, and that was with regards to fire safety.

Over time, I have become familiar with the issues that we face every day when we enter our homes and how they can be unsafe. So I'm very pleased that my colleague the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services announced last May that our government was moving ahead to make automatic sprinklers mandatory in residences for seniors with disabilities and other vulnerable residents of Ontario. That announcement built on our government's work to protect residents of this province.

In my former role as minister responsible for seniors, I helped implement the retirement homes regulation act. That act regulated the care of our seniors in retirement homes for the first time in our province's history. Among other things, the act now requires retirement homes to train all staff in fire prevention and safety, to post an explanation of the measures taken and to provide information to residents about nighttime staffing levels and whether the home has sprinklers in each resident's room.

In my own Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, we have developed tough building code and fire code standards. In fact, carbon monoxide detectors were first included in the Ontario building code back in 1993, because we recognized that carbon monoxide poisoning had become the number one cause of accidental poisoning in North America. In 2001, the building code was amended to require carbon monoxide detectors in all suites of residential occupancy where there is a source of carbon monoxide, such as a gas furnace or a gas appliance. The requirement covers both houses and multiple-unit residential buildings.

Across Ontario, a number of municipalities have passed bylaws based on the advice of their fire professionals. I do want to take a moment to thank our fire professionals. They work very, very hard on an ongoing basis, not just when we bring a piece of fire legislation here or carbon monoxide legislation. They have a regular day that they come to the Legislature and talk to us and educate us, so I appreciate the time that they do come to this Legislature and to our constituency offices to help us understand these issues.

Again, a number of municipalities have passed bylaws based on this advice, requiring carbon monoxide detectors in dwellings, often using the authority to pass property standard bylaws set out in the Building Code Act, 1992. These municipalities include my own, Brampton. Cities like Mississauga, Toronto and Oshawa have shown that leadership.

However, I acknowledge that a community-by-community approach is not the ideal way to address this issue, and we heard that from the speaker previous to my speaking. For years now, the Ontario fire service has been championing public safety. They have asked that all residents be protected by carbon monoxide alarms.

Many fire departments have enacted local bylaws that prescribe CO alarms in all residential buildings in which occupants are at risk of exposure to the poisonous CO gas. In fact, in my own home municipality of Brampton,

many residents have benefited from the protection of a CO alarm since 1998, when the Brampton fire department saw the need for these alarms and took action. They went to council, they lobbied and they got council to pass a bylaw to protect our residents.

This bill will amend the fire code and includes requirements to install carbon monoxide detectors that mitigate the risk created by the presence of these unsafe levels of carbon monoxide.

Sometimes residents have questions about what kind of alarm to buy. When you go to the store, sometimes you are overwhelmed by the number of choices and what you should install in your home. The fire service has been vocal in telling us that it's important to look for an alarm that conforms to a Canada CSA standard—and that's a 6.19 standard; that's the standard for residential carbon monoxide alarming devices—or the Underwriters Laboratories standard number 2034, the standard for single- and multiple-station carbon monoxide alarms. That's what I tell my residents to look for. By adhering to those standards, a homeowner can take some comfort in knowing that the carbon monoxide alarm has been manufactured in such a manner that it will protect them and their families and provide the maximum amount of protection.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, I'm proud that our government has decided to move forward on important life-saving initiatives. I'm glad to have been at the table. It took a long time to get my private member's bill into government legislation, and I was very pleased and proud that actually we had lots of support. I know the member from Oxford was supportive and gave constructive advice on how to make the legislation better.

I think everybody collectively in this House knows that it's important to avoid tragedies like the one in 2008 that took the lives of the OPP officer and her family in Oxford.

1450

We need to work together. We need to work with local governments. We need to work with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. We need to work with residential institutions and, of course, until the legislation is passed, we need to work with families on the importance of this issue.

I want to support the bill put forward by the member from Oxford because it's going to save lives. I want to see carbon monoxide detectors in every home in Ontario, so I'm happy to support this legislation and this member's work in his private member's deliberations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It is my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 77, the private member's bill from my colleague and friend from Oxford. Two weeks ago, in the community of Waterdown, to the northwest of Burlington, firefighters responded when a family's carbon monoxide detector was triggered. Crews arrived and evacuated a father and daughter from the house, which was showing carbon monoxide readings of 150 parts per

million. They, luckily, did not require medical attention, but it could very easily have been anything but a feel-good story. Continuous exposure to carbon monoxide at those levels can cause serious health issues. If this family didn't have that alarm installed, exposure would have been lethal within hours. Without an alarm, there is an outside chance that you would be aware that something was wrong if you were awake, but if you were asleep, you wouldn't notice a thing; you would just never wake up.

Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless, taste-free gas, and it is poisonous. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include headaches, nausea, dizziness, fatigue, shortness of breath and flu-like symptoms.

A variety of situations can lead to elevated CO levels: a gas-fired generator during a power outage, a space heater or hot water heater, a garage where the car idles as you're warming it up for winter, or leaving an unvented gas stove turned on. Whatever the cause, if you lack a carbon monoxide detector, you have no sure way of knowing when your house is filling up with poisonous gas.

The source of the problem at the Waterdown home was the heating system, reportedly an issue with the boiler and chimney. With cold weather on its way and homes sealed tighter than ever these days, the risks are not insignificant. Energy conservation means that we strive to make our homes more airtight and energy-efficient, but it is also increasing the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

That is why a bill like Bill 77 is so important. It would amend the building code to require carbon monoxide alarms in all homes with either a fuel-burning appliance or an attached storage garage. In multi-residential buildings, detectors would be required in suites with a fuel-burning appliance or those adjacent to a garage or service room with a fuel-burning appliance. Currently, the Ontario building code only requires carbon monoxide alarms in homes built after August 6, 2001, which leaves too many families at risk.

In 1997, this House passed similar legislation to Bill 77, requiring the installation and enforcement of smoke alarms in all homes. Earlier this fall, we dealt with similar legislation around radon detection. This is a common-sense measure that will save lives.

The member from Oxford is a principled and patient man. He first introduced this bill in 2008, but it died on the order paper when Premier McGuinty prorogued the House early in 2010. The same happened when it was reintroduced in 2011.

Since 2008, many municipalities have enacted bylaws to require these carbon monoxide alarms, thereby protecting their citizens. But this is an issue that would benefit most from a province-wide approach, and which deserves to be passed into law by this Legislature. I am very happy to support Bill 77.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to stand. The first thing I really need to do is to salute—as we call him in

our caucus—Uncle Ernie. I know I'm supposed to refer only to his riding, but he is Uncle Ernie to us, because he is in fact the uncle of our member from Timiskaming-Cochrane. I just want to applaud his tenacity with this.

This is five years in the making. This is four different times that he has tabled the bill. Shame on us, in a sense, that it has taken this long to get to this point, but it's cause for celebration that it will now become law. That's impressive. I want to also thank those who have come out to support this bill, because it's such an important initiative.

I want to tell a story. Many here know that I'm a United Church minister. I still am; I'm preaching this Sunday at Humbercrest church, if anybody wants to come on down to Baby Point Road. When I first came back to Toronto after being settled "in the country" as a United Church minister, my husband and I rented a house on Triller Avenue in my riding. At that point, honestly, if you had asked me about carbon monoxide or carbon monoxide detectors, I would have drawn a blank. I would have known nothing about it.

One day, we were just going about our business at home, and the alarm starts going off. As far as we knew, it was only a fire detector, but we checked, and there was no fire. The alarm kept going off, and I said, "Well, let's play it safe. Maybe there's something wrong." We called 911. The fire department was there. And here's to the fire departments, by the way: They'll be very happy about this day. The fire department was there in a few minutes, and within a few minutes, the entire street was cordoned off, not just our house. That's how bad it was; that's how high the levels were in the house. I had a very quick lesson. In fact, I'm standing here today because of that carbon monoxide detector, and so is my husband.

By the way, kudos also to first responders, who probably are the first educators as well on this issue in many, many instances, and they shouldn't have to be.

Again, there was an instance where we had a very quick education on the dangers of carbon monoxide and what it can be. We smelled nothing, knew nothing, thought nothing. In fact, it would have been very easy—I'm glad we didn't; it was just luck, truly—to disconnect it, thinking, "Well, there's no fire. This is obviously malfunctioning," and keep on keeping on.

I fear that too often, that's exactly what happens in situations like this. Many people don't know about carbon monoxide. They don't know they need the detectors in their homes. They don't know it can be caused by simple mal-operations of appliances we have in our homes, all of us: heating systems etc.

Many people who are living in rental accommodation, or many people who have just bought a house, don't know whether they have carbon monoxide detectors or not. Usually, when you walk into a house and you see something there, you assume it's a fire detector. Are you really sure it's just a fire detector or a carbon monoxide detector? What do you have?

I hope that anybody watching here today or reading about this, as this bill passes, will at least check out their

own circumstance. If they do that alone, that will save lives, because honestly, there is such a lack of knowledge about this topic out there, and it's so incredibly dangerous. We've seen the effects and we've heard the stories, and I'm one of them, but there are many, many, many others.

Again, it's also not just that the bill targets all residences. I want to make it very clear that this is also regarding tenants. If you live in a tenanted premise, you need to check and you need to make sure that your landlord has installed a carbon monoxide detector. Luckily, we lived in rental premises back then and ours had, but many have not, and many in my riding have not. In fact, many in my riding don't even have fire detectors in their homes despite the fact that that is a law.

I would say, absolutely, we in the New Democratic Party have supported this bill every single time. I think it's actually five times it has been introduced. There were four times on the paper, and then there was another time when it was attempted to be brought back. Anyway, it's five years of Uncle Ernie's life that have gone into this bill, and we support it; every single person, we've supported it every time. I'm so glad that finally it's going to see the light of day.

Then the other question is enforcement. We know that that's a difficult topic, the limited time that we have in our first-line responders to do that enforcement work. So let's be self-enforcing, quite frankly. Until this becomes law—and it will take a little while—right away, please, everyone, check your own living quarters. Please, everyone, know what you've got. Know if it's working. Make sure it is. That alone will make Uncle Ernie happy.

I can speak on behalf of Andrea Horwath, our leader, and everyone in the New Democratic Party in Ontario: We congratulate you, Uncle Ernie. We congratulate you on this moment. Finally, it has come. Hopefully, a cake will be cut tonight, and lives will be saved.

1500

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 77. Let me start off by commending the member for Oxford for the hard work he's put into this, obviously, but also for his perseverance in continuing to bring it back time and time again. I think that most members of this House, if not all members of this House, would agree that this is actually an issue whose time has come.

Like other private members' bill initiatives along the way, often the technology or the things we have in place begin to outpace the current regulations. I think that a number of constituencies around the province of Ontario—a number of communities—have taken the lead on this, and I think that what the member from Oxford is saying is that we need province-wide regulation in this regard that finally brings this issue home in a way that is meaningful to the people of Ontario. And people, whether they be in a home that they own, whether they be in rental premises, whether they be in whatever they

call home, will have the confidence and security that if there is a carbon monoxide leak somewhere in the house, they will be warned about it before it has the tragic consequences that led, I understand, to the introduction of Bill 77, which we have before us, that being the tragedy that befell the Hawkins family. Nobody wants to see that happen again, obviously. Nobody wants to see that happen to any family in any community in the province of Ontario or in the country.

Obviously, there are stakeholders who need to be consulted, and have been consulted along the way. Once again, I applaud the member for the work he has put into this in talking to the stakeholders, talking to the regulators, talking to the lawyers who draft the regulations—talking to all those people who would have a hand in ensuring that when this does come forward, it comes forward in a proper form that the regulators agree is the best way to bring it forward, that the stakeholders agree is the best way to introduce it, and that we as politicians have the confidence that what we want—that common lay knowledge we bring to this House—is brought to fruition in a way that is meaningful to the people in the province of Ontario.

I know that simply going home and falling asleep at night should be something that we're all quite confident in: that we know we're going to wake up in the morning; that we know if there's a fire, we've got smoke detectors; if something in the house malfunctions, we've also got carbon monoxide detectors that are going to tell us it's time to get out of there.

We should pay tribute to those people who put their lives on the line on a daily basis to ensure that we have safety in our own communities: the firefighters and first responders—the paramedics and police officers—who show up at premises when these types of things happen. They need to have the confidence that when they're entering a building, they also know what the condition of that building is and what the environment is like in that building. They often describe firefighters—and I'm sure this applies to a number of emergency services—as the people who are running in when you're running out. Certainly, in this regard, when these people are coming in to effect a rescue, they need to have knowledge of exactly what exists in those conditions so they can effect a rescue in the right way.

I think it speaks to the character of the individual who is bringing forward this bill that he has maintained this steady pressure on the House. Having become chief government whip and being able to sit in some of the House leaders' meetings, I now understand even more than I did before that all three parties have a hand in making sure private members' bills go through. So often we point to the government and say, "You've got to get this through," when the reality is that it's an agreement that comes as a result of a negotiation between the three parties.

I would love to see this bill go on to committee. I would like to see it get through committee, either in an improved form or in its current form. If there's a

stakeholder out there who's got some information we haven't covered, let's get that information. Let's improve it if it needs improving; let's move it on if it doesn't need improving.

I'd like to see it come back for third reading, and I'd like to see it become law, because I think the effort that the individual has extended and, as I said earlier, the perseverance he has exhibited in ensuring that this bill is given due consideration, is admirable. It speaks to the way I think our forefathers and foremothers envisioned that this place would work, in a co-operative and a collaborative fashion.

So I'm proud to stand with a member of another party today and tell him that it's an excellent idea—it should move forward—and to thank him for bringing it forward. I think he's also exhibiting the sort of action that people expect of their elected officials, regardless of what party we belong to. Something took place in his community, and he has responded. Out of a very tragic event and circumstance, the member from Oxford is trying to get some societal good out of it so that those people who knew the Hawkinses well would understand that, even though their death was tragic, they haven't died in vain. I'll be proud to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I am proud to stand once again in the Legislature to speak in favour of Bill 77, the Hawkins Gignac Act. I want to congratulate my seatmate, the member from Oxford, and the members of Laurie and Richard's family, who should all be commended for their determination in ensuring that a tragedy like the one that befell their family never, ever happens again.

The deaths of Laurie and Richard and their children hit very close to home in my riding, as they were former residents of North Bay. As mayor of the city of North Bay at the time, our community was determined to do something to ensure we never saw anything like that happen to another family in our community. In March 2009, North Bay city council enacted a bylaw making it mandatory for any home with a fuel-fired appliance to have a working carbon monoxide detector. The awareness raised through this Hawkins Gignac Act in my community has and will continue to save lives. Its passage will do likewise for all Ontarians.

The frightening thing about carbon monoxide poisoning is the number of close calls that we do not hear about, the close calls that do not get reported in the media. Let me give you an example. Last January, the North Bay fire department received 17 carbon monoxide alarm calls—17, Speaker, in one month. Of those, four had confirmed levels of carbon monoxide in the home. Fortunately, four potential tragedies were averted.

But as we're all aware, not everyone is that lucky. In September, an 84-year-old man from Burk's Falls died, and his wife was left critically ill from CO poisoning. I'm sure if members of this Legislature checked with their local fire departments, you would get a better sense of

just how frequently these close calls really do come about.

The last time I stood and spoke on this, I relayed the story of Colleen Point, a high school teacher in North Bay. She, her husband and young daughter started to feel nausea and tingling, but only when their CO alarm went off did the family of five get dressed and leave their home. Thankfully, they took their alarm seriously, and their lives were indeed saved.

CO detectors do save lives. It's as simple as that. I can't understand why anyone would object to having a device that can save a life. How can anyone not afford to have one in their home, law or no law, especially in a day like today, when you can easily get a smoke detector and CO alarm combined in one device? Why require one and not the other?

As winter approaches, I want to remind especially northern and rural Ontario residents to please periodically check the exterior vents on your home to make sure they're clear of snow and ice. This is one of the biggest dangers we face in the north when it comes to possible carbon monoxide poisonings, and the importance of this message can't be stressed enough, Speaker.

In closing, I congratulate members of this House for supporting the Hawkins Gignac Act to ensure that it receives third and final reading. We owe Laurie and Richard's family at least that much. Passing this legislation means we, as legislators, will literally save lives, and it's not every day that we in this House can say that. Please join me in supporting the member from Oxford today.

1510

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to support Bill 77, introduced by the member from Oxford. I have to tell him that when we persevere, we finally get it; right? I introduced condo reform four years in a row. You've done the same thing. It usually takes an initiative from a member at least four times until they're heard by governments—not two, not three, but four. Why? I'll never understand it.

I know the member from Oakville makes the point that if we just co-operated a little better, things would get done. But it can get done. If you've got unanimous agreement with all three political parties, the government can take that initiative, thank the member from Oxford, and introduce it as their own bill. That party would be obliged, I would think, to support that bill. The third party that supports it, I think, would be obliged to support it—and we're done. There are ways to get things done if we want it, as opposed to blaming somebody else if it doesn't.

It is equally true that if the Conservative Party and New Democrats agree on some bill by way of debate on a motion here, or a bill, the government still has the power unilaterally to say no, not to proclaim that bill. They have the power to say no.

So yes, it would be nice for parties to agree. And wouldn't it be great if we just could co-operate and eliminate politics altogether and become one party? It would be really nice, but it's just not going to happen. But there are ways to make things happen if we all seem to be in agreement.

The problem identified here—and it was identified by the member from Parkdale–High Park—is that the majority of people simply do not know that carbon monoxide kills you. They just don't know. You have educated people who don't know. You have a whole lot of people in Ontario who have never gotten this information from anybody, alerting them to this serious, lethal problem. Here is a failure of governments not to educate the public around these dangers. It's a failure of the municipal governments, as well, because they, too, have a job in their own communities to alert people to these problems. We can solve lack of knowledge around issues of this sort.

In particular, today we're talking about carbon monoxide as the silent killer, as something that can be defeated if we all do a better job of it—and making it mandatory is going to get to it. This isn't like seat belts or like the cellphones that we were talking about, where some people see this as an infringement of their space and their entitlements. This is a different issue. I don't believe that people would feel bad if they were told, "By the way, carbon monoxide can kill you. Maybe you should have this little device in your home to alert you to the problem, in the event that some exhaust is blocked and, as a result, you and your family might get killed." If people are told that, and if you make it mandatory in particular, I think this will happen.

I congratulate the member for Oxford, and I think this will happen very soon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm really pleased to speak to Bill 77, the Hawkins-Gignac Act, this afternoon. As has been mentioned, my colleague from Oxford has been very determined on this bill, having first introduced it in 2008 and three more times since then. I'm really pleased that he has been so determined. It looks like he's going to have success this time, with support from all parties, so I'm very pleased about that, Mr. Speaker. This bill will make carbon monoxide alarms mandatory in all residences with a fuel-burning appliance or attached garage.

I'm pleased to welcome John Gignac here to the Legislature today. He's the brother of Doug Gignac from Parry Sound—so it does have a connection to my riding—and I did know his brother very well. Welcome, John; it's a pleasure to meet you. Tragically, Douglas Gignac passed away last year. He was a good friend. I had an opportunity to go on a couple of golf trips with him to Myrtle Beach, so I got to know him fairly well—certainly a real connection, obviously, to Parry Sound. Of course, it was their niece Laurie Hawkins and her family,

as mentioned by the member from Oxford, who were tragically killed by carbon monoxide poisoning.

Carbon monoxide is impossible to detect. It's an odourless, colourless, tasteless gas. This is why carbon monoxide detectors are essential and why this bill is so important. It can prevent tragedies like the ones that we've been talking about today. From 2000 until 2007, 414 Canadians died from carbon monoxide, almost 90 of them here in Ontario. Hundreds more suffer from the after-effects of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Just this year, I brought up at the recent Parry Sound district association meeting the fact that this bill was again going to be debated. I think it was the fire chief of Parry Sound who said how happy he was that this was going to be moving forward and debated and hopefully passed. He mentioned that there had been recent tragedies in Parry Sound district. One was mentioned by the member from Nipissing. An 11-year-old boy vacationing in Seguin township just earlier this fall and an elderly woman cottaging in Burk's Falls both passed away from carbon monoxide poisoning. In both cases, I believe it was propane coolers operating in confined spaces.

I might point out that we're just about into deer hunting season, and there are lots of people out there in trailers with different devices, so they also need to be wary of carbon monoxide poisoning when they're out hunting.

Polls show that 60% of homes across Canada still do not have carbon monoxide alarms. Tragedies such as the one that happened to the Hawkins-Gignac family can be prevented with a CO alarm. This bill will go a long way towards preventing such tragedies from occurring again and raising public awareness, so I'm very happy to support it. I hope it goes through and passes third reading as well and becomes law, and will, without doubt, go forward to save lives in the province of Ontario. Just like smoke detectors now are the law and do save lives, this will, when it becomes commonplace that all homes have CO detectors—together with the education that goes along with it—make a difference and will save lives in the province of Ontario.

Thank you to the member from Oxford for bringing it forward. I look forward to it becoming the law of the land.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'll now return to the member from Oxford to reply.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I do want to thank all the members of the Legislature who spoke so strongly in favour of this bill. It's obviously reassuring that we have been on the right track for some time now.

I did also want to thank the people who came here today, but particularly the group of Girl Guides who came here. First of all, their coming here is part of their education to see how government in Ontario works, but more importantly, they are an example of the benefits of having a detector. If it wasn't for them having a detector, they may not have been able to be here. I'm just sitting here wishing that more people had done it so a lot of

these tragedies that have happened could have been avoided if we'd had this law 10 years ago. I'm very happy that it got this far.

The member from Oakville spoke about going to committee and getting the public involved and getting the involvement of all the stakeholders to make sure we're doing the right thing. I think in this bill, we have done a very good job of that because we have obviously been doing that consulting now for five years. We have here a list of the organizations, the stakeholders, that one would be talking to: the Ontario fire marshal; the fire chief for the city of Woodstock; the fire chief for the town of Ingersoll; the acting deputy chief for the city of Brampton; the former fire chief of the city of Toronto Fire Services; the Co-operators Group; David Thomson, past president of the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario; the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs; and then, of course, John Gignac, whom we've been working with the whole five years; the Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council; the city of Toronto's emergency services; the Insurance Bureau of Canada; Parachute Canada; and Duracell Canada. These are all organizations that we have been consulting with. Every one of them has given us written support for this bill, recognizing that it is that important that we put a carbon monoxide detector in every home in the province of Ontario for the safety of the residents of Ontario.

1520

BEAR CONTROL

Mr. John Vanthof: I move that, in the opinion of this House, a special committee on bear management should be appointed to examine and inquire into the following matters:

- the lack of prior consultation with affected communities and the related effects of the Harris government decision to cancel the spring bear hunt;

- the cuts to the Ministry of Natural Resources budget under the McGuinty and Wynne governments, especially as they pertain to nuisance bears;

- the extent to which human-bear conflicts are increasing across the province;

- the extent to which damage to crops by bears continues to increase in parts of the province; and

That the committee develop and report on a comprehensive, fully-funded bear management strategy to be implemented by the Ministry of Natural Resources, based on:

- thorough consultation with impacted municipalities and stakeholders;

- an evaluation and determination of the long-term sustainability of the bear population and all cohabiting species, such as moose;

- all management factors, including hunting and trapping, as sustainable management tools; and

That the committee be comprised of one member from each recognized party, plus one member from the government caucus who shall serve as Chair; and

That the committee be authorized to meet in locations in Ontario at the call of the Chair.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Vanthof has moved private member's notice of motion number 49. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

I again recognize the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you very much, Speaker. First of all, I'd like to say that I never thought 10 years ago that I'd be a farmer standing here in the Legislature of Ontario, talking about bears, but here I am.

A person's perspective on black bears has a lot to do with where you live and whether you see one on a TV screen or through a window. Those of us who live in bear country appreciate wildlife, but we realize that nuisance bears have to be managed. We are also often frustrated when practical knowledge gained by years of experience coexisting with bears is ignored.

The year 2007 was a bad year for bears in central Temiskaming. There were bears everywhere: in towns, villages and in every farm field. In one corner of my corn field, we counted 18. When we went to harvest the corn, there was nothing to harvest. Area farmers lost hundreds of thousands of dollars due to bear damage. All summer, the Temiskaming Federation of Agriculture lobbied the Minister of Natural Resources and the ministry to invoke existing legislation that would have allowed farmers to take some measures to protect their livelihood, but to no avail.

In November, the MNR held an invitation-only meeting to discuss the bear issue. As president of the Temiskaming Federation of Agriculture, I recounted the farm experience that we'd had that summer. I was told by an MNR biologist that, "With all due respect, what you have described could not have happened. Bears are territorial, so the numbers that you are describing are simply not possible," to which I replied, "Obviously, you have never been to a northern landfill." Everyone except the biologist laughed. I had a picture of a landfill, and there were 30 bear faces looking out of the trench.

Practical knowledge would suggest that bears are driven by need. They need to build up fat reserves for their hibernation, and if their normal food supply—in that case, wild blueberries; they froze—is compromised, they will overcome their territorial instinct and look for other food sources—in our case, farmers' fields.

There is a need for scientific knowledge on bears, but there's also a very big need for practical discussion from people who live in bear country.

But at least in 2007, the MNR would respond to residential complaints. They would come into a town and trap and move a nuisance bear. Under normal conditions, bears are territorial, and as a result, they are almost everywhere through their territory; so the chance of an encounter is always there. We accept that and feel privileged to have such a close relationship with wildlife, and the vast majority of us take precautions.

Human-bear encounters happen on a fairly regular basis. Most go unreported and are uneventful. But when a

bear becomes predatory, it can be very dangerous. In May, near Cochrane, in my riding, a bear attacked Joe Azougar as he was eating breakfast. It killed his dog, broke into his cabin and attacked him as he was trying to escape. Two people in a passing car saw the attack. They drove the bear off with their vehicle and saved Joe's life. I talked to Joe on Tuesday. He's recovering from his injuries, but the scarring, physically and mentally, will last a lifetime.

After the near-fatal attack in May, the Cochrane district has continued to have a much higher than normal number of bear encounters, thereby greatly increasing the possibility of another dangerous outcome. Bears are stressed there, and unpredictable. The municipality of Cochrane has had much the same reaction from the Ministry of Natural Resources as the Timiskaming federation had a few years earlier, but there's one big difference: Due to budget cuts, the MNR no longer traps bears. They only have a helpful hint line. So now, if someone is threatened by a bear, their options are to phone a friend or call 911. And when the police respond, the municipal foots the bill.

In reality, the MNR does not currently have an effective nuisance bear management program. That was confirmed on October 3 when, in response to my question, the MNR minister responded, "This is an issue that we take very seriously, and we are developing a plan. I look forward to the member's support on the plan that we bring forward." How did it come to this: a ministry charged with the management of wildlife that doesn't have a plan to manage bears or protect people?

Black bears have been and continue to be a politically charged issue in this province, mainly because of the spring bear hunt. The black bear was officially declared a game animal in 1961. Over the years, outfitters built up a substantial part of their business with the spring hunt of male bears. In 1999, the Mike Harris Conservative government cancelled the spring bear hunt without any consultation with the people who depended on it for their livelihoods. Even northerners who had no connection to the spring bear hunt felt betrayed by the total lack of regard for their opinion, and this sense of betrayal is still very raw in northern Ontario.

As I stated previously, last year the Liberal government cancelled the live trapping of nuisance bears. The reason: Live trapping does not work. So they replaced it with—

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Nothing.

Mr. John Vanthof: —nothing. There are more helpful telephone tips from call centres, and glossy brochures, but no real solutions.

Now there's a private member's bill brought forward by the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan to bring back the spring bear hunt. It is my sincere hope that this is an attempt to really address the problem and not simply an attempt to gain votes. The people who lost a large part of their livelihoods with the cancellation, and those who have to deal with nuisance bears, deserve that much.

It's for those reasons above that I have introduced this motion, and I'd like to spend a few minutes talking about why we structured this motion and some of the most important things about this: a special committee, with one member from each party plus a government Chair.

It might sound funny, but we are trying to take this issue—because the people and, quite frankly, wildlife have been failed by the political process for the last 20 years. We'd like to take it out of the political process and put it into the legislative process. I truly believe—we truly believe—that the legislators who could be put on this committee could come up with solutions. With the way the committee's structured—one from each party plus one government—one side wouldn't be able to beat up the other side. They would have to come up with solutions.

1530

One very, very important part of this committee's work is that it would have to travel to places where people actually interact with bears, for the sake of the people and for the sake of the bears. This committee would have to talk to municipalities, would have to talk to stakeholders to gain their practical knowledge of what is really going on and how to make things better for people in bear country and better for the bears where there are people. It's very, very important.

One of the things that this committee would be charged with is to actually, for the first time, take a real good look at the spring bear hunt. It was cancelled 14 years ago without any consultation. It's time to take a real good look at it and to see if actually the spring bear hunt has an impact on nuisance bears, other than straight numbers. There are people on the ground who say that if we stagger the hunt, it builds up a wariness of humans among the bear population. Having lived with other animals—that's a point that has never really been discussed, and that's something that this committee could and should look at.

The spring bear hunt, as politically charged as it is, has actually never been looked at outside of the political arena, and it is time. To just suggest that we'll put a motion forward, we'll put a bill forward, to bring it back, doesn't make it any more stable than taking it away without consultation. Bringing it back without consultation is pretty well a guarantee that it's never going to come back. Maybe it shouldn't, but we have to look at those issues. I think this committee, travelling across the province, would be the best way to take it out of the political process and put it into the legislative process.

When we went through the bear problem of 2007—one thing a lot of people also don't realize is that you don't get the same place having the same bear problem every year. So somehow, something has to be devised that when someone rings the alarm—wait a second; there's a problem coming here—like, in May, when Joe was attacked, this wasn't just a single one. There is a stressor there, and we have to find out what the stressor is, and there has to be a way to react to that. For the people who haven't lived through a bear invasion—for

lack of a better word—how would you feel if, after 7:30 at night, you couldn't let your dog out because there's a good chance that the dog is going to meet a bear? That doesn't happen all the time. There are certain stressors that create that, and we've never actually looked at how to combat those stressors.

This is a very, very important issue not only for the people who live in bear country—and bear country, as we're seeing in Ontario, is getting bigger and bigger. It used to be just in northern Ontario. It's rural Ontario. Unless we really know what's going on, it's not just dangerous for the people; it's dangerous for the bears.

Before 2007, on my farm, I had a mother bear and two cubs on my back forty. I watched them; they were my pets. They were there for years, the same mother. But after everything was destroyed, a lot of farmers were much less accepting of having any bears on their property. Ignoring the problem does not make it safer for wildlife.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I rise today with great pleasure to speak to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane's motion to start a special committee on bear management.

As the former Minister of Natural Resources, I learned a lot in my former portfolio, so this issue is quite close to my heart. It's an issue I heard about often when I served as the Minister of Natural Resources, and I learned a lot from individuals in northern communities who have been dealing with the black bear issue for generations.

That's why our government listened to their concerns and worked with the Nuisance Bear Review Committee to come up with recommendations on how our government can best help northern communities in managing their interaction with bears, because, at the end of the day, dealing with bears and their interactions with humans is a responsibility that we share with local municipal governments, the province and individuals.

That's why our government created the Bear Wise program. It's a program that tackles this complicated issue by providing information and guidance on how best to deal with those conflicts between bears and humans. As is often the case, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. That's why the Bear Wise program provides municipalities guidance on how bylaws can be introduced to reduce the potential of interactions between bears and residents.

I learned when I was at MNR that municipalities and communities across the province of Ontario have been working for many years with us with regard to the Bear Wise program to create plans to deal with problem areas, improve local landfills to try and make them less enticing to bears, as well as working to install bear-resistant containers in landfills, transfer stations and the north's parks and recreation areas. Actually, I can remember travelling to the north and finding that bear-resistant containers, unless I read the instructions, were actually people-resistant containers too.

When the municipality joins with the provincial government to implement a local Bear Wise program, residents will be better protected, while the municipality would reduce the chance of conflict between bears and humans, as well as saving money and time responding to those calls. But providing municipalities the tools to deal with bears will not, in and of itself, stop potentially dangerous interactions with bears. That's why since 2004 our government has spent over \$5 million for more than 600 prevention and awareness projects with our municipal and First Nation partners, as well as with other ministries. This \$5 million doesn't even include the over \$34 million our government has invested to help ensure that Ontarians know about how to prevent human and bear conflicts.

This money has gone to help all Ontarians, whether they're residents of northern Ontario or tourists who visit our north's majestic landscape. That is because many of the interactions between bears and people occur when people are outside the city limits, whether they are snowshoeing in the winter or birdwatching during the summer. And because tourism is vitally important to our northern communities, we've worked with our partners to expand the fall bear hunt. Now the almost three-month-long fall bear hunt provides 700 tourist outfitters in northern communities with the economic benefits from the increased tourism that they provide.

However, tourism and economic opportunities only matter if Ontarians are confident they can stay safe. That is why I would want to remind any individual that if there were a bear that posed an imminent threat or that they were in a life-threatening situation, they should call 911 or the local police. Certainly there is a bear-reporting line, which is 1-866-514-3227, or 1-866-514-BEAR, to report bear problems.

I appreciate the private members' debate that's occurring today, and I appreciate the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane reminding this House about how important bear safety is for many Ontarians, but I'm reluctant to support this particular amendment because I don't believe these concerns can be addressed as well in a committee format. I think we need to deal with these concerns on the ground with northern Ontario, working with municipalities, tourist groups and certainly our law enforcement individuals. I believe it's work that we've done well with our government in the past, and I would support the work that we continue to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to rise in this House today to speak to ballot item number 54, which proposes a special committee on bear management.

I'd like first of all to point out, Mr. Speaker, that I was actually preparing to speak to a different order paper motion that was put forward by the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane to do with a northern committee of MPPs. That motion has been resubmitted by the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane. He actually said, at a committee meeting in Seguin township, that if he did resubmit it, he would include Parry Sound–Muskoka.

1540

I'll read from the Huntsville Forester. The headline is "MPP Willing to Include Parry Sound in the North." "While Vanthof closed off the meeting saying he wouldn't retract the motion and start over, he did say that if it dies on the order papers or is defeated, he'd resubmit it and this time include Parry Sound district."

So, Mr. Speaker, he has resubmitted. I'm disappointed to see that the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane did not keep his word.

I would also like to—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member from Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The member knows well you can't impugn motive. He has to retract that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Norm Miller: I withdraw.

Mr. Speaker, there were also budget cuts in this motion that were related to cuts to the Ministry of Natural Resources. I would agree that there have been cuts to do with bear management. I think the idea of the OPP being called in when there are nuisance bear issues is ridiculous.

I've also seen the MNR cuts in other areas. Recently, I'm getting all kinds of calls from builders in Parry Sound-Muskoka who are trying to build boathouses and keep people employed. It used to take two weeks to get a permit. It's now taking 12 to 16 weeks.

Bill Ferguson sent me an email:

"I called and talked to an Ariel Zwicker, a Lands and Water Technical Specialist ... of the Ministry of Natural Resources and was told because of the cutbacks it could take 12 weeks to produce a permit.

"Last time I applied ... it took two weeks."

So he's having to lay off all his workers. I just wanted to get that on the record. It's something that's certainly not acceptable.

The riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka has certainly been affected by nuisance bears. Last year, we had Archipelago township passing their own bylaws and creating petitions, wanting to create their own hunt to deal with the huge numbers of bears that have been occurring in the Parry Sound district.

Unfortunately, I don't have as much time as I'd like to talk about all the points that I'd like to get across.

I note that the member from Oshawa, when he was Minister of Natural Resources, actually had a committee that looked into the issue and recommended reinstating a spring bear hunt. I know there was a motion at a recent PC conference. I know that we have made some suggestions in our northern white paper.

I don't think this motion that has been put forward is going to really solve the problem.

In fact, I see that the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters have come out and said:

"The OFAH cannot support the thrust of the motion....

"The committee structure and process that is proposed in the Vanthof motion will, in our view, not produce the desired results, and quite frankly, be largely redundant."

That's from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. Mr. Speaker, I agree with them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I know that some of my other colleagues want to speak to this, so I'm not going to take a lot of time. I just want to say up front that I think what has really frustrated people in Ontario, and specifically northerners, about how this whole spring bear hunt thing has been dealt with is that nobody got a chance to have their say. It was a decision made by the Mike Harris government. It happened. Yes, it was supported by all sides of the House. I understand that. But I think it speaks to the problem of how this Legislature sometimes, even though they think they're doing the right thing, can get it wrong if you don't have a process where you involve the public.

I think what the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane is trying to do, which I support, is to say, "Listen, let's put this item at a special committee"—not a select committee of nine members; a special committee with something that we're entitled to under the rules, with a member from each caucus, chaired by the government, in order to go out and consult with those people affected: outfitters, municipalities, people who may have their own issues in regard to how they feel about this, whoever it might be, so that we can take a look at all of the issues. And there are issues to look at.

We need to take a look at: Are we doing an effective job of managing bears in northern Ontario and across this province, when it comes to the overall population? How many bears are there? I don't think we really know what the bear population actually is. What has been the effect of the cancellation of the spring bear hunt? Has it led to an increase in population of bears? Is it good? Is it bad? We can look at all of those things, and then have a rational discussion with those people who are affected, and then come back and make some recommendations to the government about how this could be fixed. What could be wrong with that? It's a question of us putting the faith in the people of Ontario to come and have presentations at committee. This is not one of those blue-ribbon panels that Ms. Wynne is putting forward, one of 36. This is a committee of the Legislature that has full legislative authority to be able to travel in this province, gather information and make recommendations by way of a report of the committee back to this Legislature. Then this Legislature can decide what to do, but at least be informed on what people have to say.

There is a sense where I come from in my riding of Timmins-James Bay, and I would think it's the same in others, that there's been a lot of problems with how we've dealt with this entire bear issue.

Anecdotaly, we see more bears. Why? I don't think it's just a cancellation of the spring bear hunt, to be fair. I think that's maybe part of it. The other part is that there's been changes to how many dumps are open. The MNR

shut down a number cottage dumps, which means that bears that used to feed at the cottage dumps are now feeding in people's backyards and out of their garbage pails. It's a question that there are more people living and encroaching on the bear territory so the bears are more in contact with human beings; the bears are becoming more accustomed to human beings. Why? Because now they're eating our garbage in our backyard.

There is no capacity at this point because of cuts that have been made by the current Liberal government to the Bear Wise program and the management program. Now when you call the MNR and you say, "I have a nuisance bear in my backyard and I am worried for my safety and that of my family," they say, "If that's the case, take out your gun and shoot it." How is that a good thing for us as a society or for the bears? In some cases, we're probably shooting more bears now by way of the police shooting them in municipalities because they're nuisance bears, or individual cottagers themselves or people living in the country having to shoot them for reasons.

I remember not too long ago, my daughter lived on Rea Street in the middle of downtown Timmins. I'm out visiting my daughter and I see police cars running all over the neighbourhood. They shot a bear, like, two blocks away from my daughter's house, in the middle of the city of Timmins. This is not country; this is the middle of the city. It would be like shooting a bear in your neighbourhood where you live. It is a problem.

Just anecdotally, where I live out in Kamiskotia Lake—I have a cottage out there where I spend a lot of time; it's more of a house nowadays—I go out there and I see more bears now. I do the things that I'm supposed to do. I don't put raw garbage inside my garbage. I recycle; I make sure to clean out the recycling stuff. I take the garbage, I put it inside the garage when I'm going to be gone for any period of time so the bears can't get it. You should see the scratch marks on my garage door from the bears trying to get into the garage. Now, I've got a good garage and they're not getting in, but it's a real problem.

So I say to people in this House, support this because it gives us a chance to engage with the public and to say to them, "Listen, at least have your say about how we can deal with this in a rational way." I hope to support Mr. Vanthof's motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to start my response by thanking the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane for the opportunity to speak to this issue and for his obvious passion.

While I recognize the spirit with which the motion was made, I disagree with the assertion of the member that our government is not doing our job when it comes to bear management, and comments that we're disregarding the concerns of northerners. Our government understands the concerns expressed by individuals in northern communities which have been dealing with the problem of black bears. Our government is committed to addressing the problem of nuisance bears. We have heard the concerns expressed by some communities with higher-

than-average nuisance bear problems and are evaluating our wildlife management practices.

I'd also like to take this time to recognize the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan for his advocacy on this issue. I know that he's recently put a private member's bill forward himself and he has shown some real leadership on this issue.

I want to reinforce that public safety remains the government's number one priority. Since forming government, the Ontario Liberals have worked hard to create a better bear management program.

In 2003, an independent panel, the Nuisance Bear Review Committee, tabled a report on human-bear conflicts. Many of the recommendations from this report have been incorporated by the MNR in their bear management plan. One of these recommendations was the Bear Wise program.

The Bear Wise program is a multifaceted approach to problem bear management. Through the Bear Wise program, MNR has worked with community leaders to establish local prevention programs. Responsibility for managing human-bear conflicts is shared by the province, the local governments and residents. Mr. Speaker, we have worked collaboratively with the OPP and local police services to ensure public safety, and that communities across Ontario are educated about bear behaviour and how to mitigate human-bear conflicts. Despite some of these claims that we have downloaded responsibility onto police, it has always been the practice for local OPP officers to respond to emergency situations resulting from a bear encounter. If a bear poses an immediate threat to public safety, I'd like to remind the public that they should call 911 or their local police.

1550

The frequency of bear-human conflicts generally increases in the years where there is less natural food available. This can happen for a variety of reasons, from human encroachment on bear territory to poor weather. This causes bears to look for food in areas they would normally avoid and, in some cases, to come into conflict with humans. Bears will lose their natural fear when they get used to finding non-natural sources of food, such as garbage and pet food, near where people live.

In certain cases, bears can become destructive when they try to obtain a non-natural food source. Because of this, one of the most important steps to take in minimizing bear-human conflicts is to remove the items that attract bears in the first place, items such as a garbage can or a dirty barbecue. By keeping properties clean, keeping smells under wrap and never allowing bears access to non-natural foods in the first place, bears are less likely to visit.

The toll-free bear reporting line will continue to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to provide advice. MNR also provides information and advice through the Bear Wise website on how to bear-proof private property and remove bear attractants. No other jurisdiction in North America has invested as much as Ontario in teaching people how to prevent human-bear conflicts in their communities.

To show our government's commitment to this issue, just take a look at the numbers. Since 2004, MNR has invested over \$34.5 million to ensure that Ontarians are aware of the known and preventable causes of human-bear conflicts, and over \$5 million for more than 600 prevention and awareness projects with municipalities, First Nations and other ministries.

One of the points that was brought up in the past is that the ministry has cancelled the trap-and-relocate program for nuisance bears. The member is correct that the ministry will no longer trap and relocate the average problem bear. However, in exceptional circumstances and at the request of police, the ministry will still intervene and place traps. The reasoning for this is that the trap-and-relocate method has always been our least effective method to manage problem bears. Research has confirmed that many relocated bears will simply return to the areas they were removed from. Therefore, for the vast majority of nuisance bears, the trap-and-relocate effort has proved to be an inefficient use of government resources and taxpayer money.

The MNR is proud to be working collaboratively with the OPP and local police services to protect public safety and educate communities across Ontario about bear behaviour. As I stated before, the MNR will continue to respond to requests from local police and the OPP to deal with emergency situations involving bears.

We have continually reached out to the OPP and chiefs of police throughout Ontario to ensure our excellent working relationship for the safety and protection of all Ontarians. A memorandum of understanding has been signed between the MNR and the OPP to clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of each partner in responding to bear-related incidents.

In addition to the Bear Wise Program and our efforts with police, our government has also expanded the fall bear hunt. This expanded hunt continues to provide both recreational and economic benefits to northern communities and approximately 700 tourist outfitters. Hunting opportunities have increased several times during this last decade, and in many areas the fall bear hunt has now been extended by an additional four weeks, to about three months in length. In addition, resident hunters can harvest a second bear in some areas that can support additional harvests.

In closing, public safety remains the number one priority of this government, and we will continue to ensure that black bear management in Ontario remains responsive to ecological, social and economic interests.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak today to the motion put forward by the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane.

The problem of nuisance bears has been persistent in northern Ontario. In fact, I have several photos on my BlackBerry that I've taken myself, but I have to say, another committee, another panel, another conversation is not going to rid northern Ontario of the black bears.

The black bear population in Ontario is increasing. There have been growing reports of black bears acting

aggressively towards humans and some recent high-profile attacks that you've heard about earlier. But what this motion does is simply kick the can down the road. It proposes a committee of MPPs. It doesn't specify northern MPPs, incidentally, where the problem is more acute, just another panel to study an issue that northerners and wildlife management experts already know the answers to.

In our northern white paper released last month, we directly address the issue of wildlife management in the north. We state, "Give northerners more control over the use and management of their land and wildlife. Northern decisions that primarily affect the north are most appropriately made in the north."

The truth of this matter is that even if the House adopts this motion, nothing will happen. This government has neglected the north for the past decade—ignored the voice—and it will never do anything substantive to deal with this issue.

I can give you proof, Speaker, and let me read this to you. In 2005, my Liberal predecessor, who became a cabinet minister and their House leader, brought a motion before this House on the problem of nuisance bears, to her credit. She stated "that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should do whatever is necessary to protect the citizens of Ontario from nuisance bears." It was unanimously approved in this Legislature. That was eight years ago. What did her Liberal government do with it? Absolutely nothing. Nothing has been done.

In fact, we've taken a step backwards. The MNR last year cancelled its relocation program and no longer sets out traps for problem bears. It's representative of the Liberals' treatment of the north. They've given up and left northerners to fend for themselves.

Recently, at our policy convention, a motion came forward from our northern colleagues that would offer northern municipalities the option of implementing a spring bear hunt, managed through the MNR, similar to the success of the Sunday gun hunting initiative granted to municipalities. Let the municipalities in the affected areas have the right to implement it themselves.

Quite frankly, I think the NDP have been holding hands for so long with the Liberals that they're starting to believe another conversation, another panel, another committee will actually solve the serious problems we have in this province. Stockholm syndrome appears to have set in with that party.

As I've said before in this chamber, the solutions to our problems aren't hard to figure out; they're just hard to do. And it's obvious I've hit a nerve with both parties—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Order. I can't hear the member for Nipissing and he's only about 12 feet away. I'd ask the members to come to order.

I return to the member for Nipissing. I'll give you extra time too.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. It's obvious that I've hit a nerve with both parties on the Stockholm syndrome.

When it comes to bear management in the north, we just need a government to implement it. What is proposed by the NDP is a toothless, non-binding motion they know is just window dressing, to appear to be doing something when in fact it will do nothing. They certainly are learning well from their budget bedfellows across the aisle.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm very pleased to stand and speak on the motion—I think the very well-crafted motion—that was put forward by my caucus colleague and seatmate, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

First of all, I would like to say that I think this is a great idea. I really strongly believe in this concept that he has put forward, because for too long this issue has been politicized. It's really two issues. It's bear management and the safety of Ontarians, and that's rolled in with the spring bear hunt, and the two are getting lost with one another.

Here we see recently that the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan has brought forward a bill to bring back the spring bear hunt, but that does nothing to address the very real and serious safety concerns that Ontarians face, particularly in the north, on a daily basis.

1600

I have to say that I disagree vehemently with the comments that were made by the member from Nipissing. Although northerners do encounter bears on a regular basis, we have heard time and time again—and anybody who reads the newspapers in this province will see—that this is not just a northern issue. This is an Ontario issue. As my colleague said, it doesn't matter if you live in northern Ontario, rural Ontario—I would even argue in urban Ontario—it is becoming a problem no matter where you live.

The other perspective I wanted to bring is that of tourism. We live in a time right now, with this government—it started with the McGuinty government, and it has continued with the Wynne government—that they have declared all-out war on our tourism industry. We've seen everything from the closure of the Ontario travel information centres, especially in my riding; a travel app that doesn't work and doesn't have northwestern Ontario content; Travel Manitoba billboards that are dotting our highways; and an MNR that is not appropriately managing fish stocks. So our tourism industry is really taking a hit, and with this hit and all of these decisions that are being made, more and more people are thinking that the solution would be to return to the spring bear hunt.

What the PCs did when they cancelled the spring bear hunt without notice or consultation was essentially pull the rug out from under our tourism operators. I don't believe it's fair to change the rules of the game partway through for people who depend on tourism—this is their livelihood—for people who have already invested everything they've got. They've put their blood, sweat and tears into their business, and it's not the role of government to shut down or prohibit business.

The PCs also talked about their plan to allow the spring bear hunt to be managed by municipalities, but that is an absolutely ludicrous idea. To me, it doesn't make sense that we would just expect—as my colleague from Timmins–James Bay says, what are we supposed to do? Are we supposed to just allow a spring bear hunt on the corner of Main and Second? We're going to have a spring bear hunt in downtown Kenora, Dryden or Sioux Lookout? I mean, I don't see how that's safe for the bears, which may be injured and not killed, and it's certainly not safe for people living in the north. We aren't exactly the Wild West, so it's kind of a strange concept. Really, I think it's just another example of the PCs' affinity for downloading responsibilities and shirking responsibilities onto municipalities, and it's just not workable. And as I said, the spring bear hunt won't do anything to help protect us from rogue bears.

It's become a highly politicized issue, and I really believe that we need to take the politics out of it. One of the best ways to do that is to set up a committee that will listen to all the different perspectives: listen to the scientists, listen to all three political parties and, more importantly, listen to the people on the ground, the people who are interacting with bears and who have that knowledge and that experience.

We can't continue to have situations like we've been having, especially over the past year in Sioux Lookout in my riding. There was a period of time, after cuts were made to the Bear Wise program, when I was getting messages on Facebook and calls in my constituency office at all times of the day. People were really concerned, because bears were wandering into schoolyards right in downtown Sioux Lookout.

Something needs to be done. I mean, we can't have a government that, again, is trying to shirk its responsibility. The fact is that we have bears in Ontario and we need to have a mechanism to safely manage them and keep people safe. It needs to be based on science. We need to have input from experts, and we need to have public input. It's foolish to think we can continue to just ignore the problem and think it's going to manage itself, or to use a toll-free number for people to deal with the problem.

Now, it's really difficult to get statistics, and the main reason it's so difficult to get statistics on bear encounters is because the MNR no longer keeps those statistics. But what we do know, according to the MNR, is that as of August, there have been 669 bear occurrences throughout Ontario just this summer, and in 2012 there were 2,200. Again, that shows there is quite a need for this management.

And with that, I'm not sure if there's anyone else in caucus who would like to—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No.

Mr. John Vanthof: Keep going.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Okay, all righty.

Interjection.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Yes, I see that. I think—
Interjection.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Oh? Yes, okay. My colleague, I believe, from Algoma-Manitoulin—do you really want 30 seconds?—would like to have a few seconds to chat about this important bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak on this issue. I'm going to take quite a different perspective. I'm going to start off by reading out what the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters released today, where it specifically states that "The OFAH cannot support the thrust of the motion, which appears to be an attempt to avoid discussion and debate of Bill 114, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Amendment Act (Spring Bear Hunt), 2013," and quite frankly I agree with them.

I'm quite surprised that they would all of a sudden show up today, on Monday, and bring forward this resolution because, quite frankly, I believe that their caucus is extremely divided on it and they don't want to be on the record on either side of this issue. So they found a compromise that gives them an out, to not have to deal with this issue.

Let me go on a little bit further, and here's some of the premise by which I make that decision. You see, Mr. Speaker, the member from Timmins-James Bay specifically states, "I've got to say that our caucus—I'm personally not on side with this decision—has always taken the position that the cancellation is something that should be maintained.... However, that is the position of the NDP caucus...." That's from the member from Timmins-James Bay, to go on to specifically state that.

For those of us who have been around long enough, we should know exactly what took place when this issue came forward to this Legislature. I might add: "on bringing an end to the spring bear hunt, we can celebrate that there will be no more cubs killed in that manner." Of course, it was against the law at that time already. "We can stop this. All it takes is us to stand up with the majority of Ontarians. Northerners, southerners, rural, city, everybody agrees in the majority to end the spring bear hunt. We call on all MPPs to call on the minister to do just that." And who was that? It was the member from Beaches-Woodbine, who handed out these to every single member of the Legislature at that particular time. I'll keep it down now.

It was the NDP that took that position at that time, and they were very specific on how they wanted to move forward with that. They didn't want it around.

Now, to go on, in regard to talking about the fact that there weren't any informed individuals, I would quote from the March 1999 editorial out of Ontario Out of Doors, where the associate publisher-editor of Ontario Out of Doors, Burton Myers, specifically states: "Not that we weren't warned"—mind you, in regard to the closing of the spring bear hunt—"myself"—being Burton Myers—"included. Tory MPP Jerry Ouellette had told just about everyone who would listen" to him, and this goes on. Not only that—

Miss Monique Taylor: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker, but I think he's using props, and most of the times that he's speaking of, I don't even know if I was born yet.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The issue of your birth is not a point of order, but the props are. You can't use props.

I'll return to the member for Oshawa.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: So to go on, I can list the number of dates by which we split up and spoke about this, which included March 5, in Petrolia, where over 1,000 people were in attendance to deal with that very specific issue.

Quite frankly, the member has come forward and found a way to appease those Toronto members—and if anybody thinks the spring bear hunt is helping me in Oshawa, they're sadly mistaken. But the division in their caucus—they have found a way not to deal with this issue like I think it should be dealt with.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, but I would recommend that the last thing that the member should do is go on the MNR website and look at the nuisance bear committee report that already exists and does everything that the member asks for. Not only that, but the member must know Royal Poulin, who was the chair of the committee, and professor John Knight, a bear biologist at a college. The world-leading authority, Dr. Martyn Obbard, led the charge on this. Not only that, Glenn Witherspoon, who was a mayor in northern Ontario at the time, dealt with this issue. The report is already there.

If you've got a division, don't play politics in here. Come forward and vote like you should be on the member's bill when it comes forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

1610

Mr. Michael Mantha: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to try and address this as best I can. I came out of the dentist's chair, but this is too much of an important issue for northern Ontario. The member just brought an opportunity—and I hear the passion from the member, and I hear the passion from all over the place. Actually, I was sitting in the chair looking at most of the debate. But that passion needs to convert into actual results, and we have an opportunity here, through the motion the member has, to have a real discussion across this province.

All parties should be participating in this. It's still left to be determined as to who will participate on this, but it's very important for us to all sit down and have that discussion. This is the opportunity; grasp it and let's move on with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I return to the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane for his two-minute reply.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the member from Parry Sound, the member from

Timmins—James Bay, the member from Ottawa South, the member from Nipissing, the member from Kenora—Rainy River and the member from Oshawa.

The first thing I'd like to say—and I really appreciate it; I think it was a good chance that we actually got to debate this.

I was somewhat shocked that it was referred to that a committee of duly elected legislators is just some useless thing—because an expert panel is a very good thing, but it's different. It's different, and that report should come forward in a committee of legislators.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's two different things. A panel and a committee of legislators are two different things. I'm surprised they don't know that.

For the member from Nipissing, I see that the Tories haven't changed. They were the ones who brought it forward, to cancel the spring bear hunt, and they know better. Once again, they don't have to listen to anybody else because they have all the answers.

To the member from Ottawa South—and I appreciated his comments. But one thing he's missing is that by working together with the OPP, what he's doing—they've downloaded the cost to the municipalities, and that's a point. Working together is fine, but you're downloading the cost of the control of nuisance bears to the municipalities, and that's a point you missed.

What I'm getting from the Tories, from their white paper, is that they want to finish the job and download the management as well, and that's a decision, but be careful what you ask for.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

MANORANJANA KANAGASABAPATHY ACT (HAND-HELD DEVICES PENALTY), 2013

LOI MANORANJANA KANAGASABAPATHY DE 2013 (PEINE POUR CONDUITE AVEC APPAREIL PORTATIF)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We will deal first with ballot item number 52, standing in the name of Mr. Balkissoon.

Mr. Balkissoon has moved second reading of Bill 116, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to increase the penalty for the use of hand-held devices while driving.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'd like the bill referred to the Legislative Assembly committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

HAWKINS GIGNAC ACT (CARBON MONOXIDE SAFETY), 2013

LOI HAWKINS GIGNAC DE 2013 (PROTECTION CONTRE LE MONOXYDE DE CARBONE)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We'll deal with the second one now.

Mr. Hardeman has moved second reading of Bill 77, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 to provide safety requirements related to the presence of unsafe levels of carbon monoxide on premises.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'd like it referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Agreed? Agreed.

BEAR CONTROL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We will now deal with the third item.

Mr. Vanthof has moved private member's notice of motion number 49.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1615 to 1620.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the members to take their seats.

Once again: Mr. Vanthof has moved private member's notice of motion number 49.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while you are counted by the table.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Bisson, Gilles
Campbell, Sarah
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Del Duca, Steven
Dhillon, Vic
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy

Fraser, John
Hunter, Mitzie
Kwinter, Monte
MacCharles, Tracy
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
McNeely, Phil
Miller, Paul
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Natyshak, Taras

Prue, Michael
Sandals, Liz
Sattler, Peggy
Schein, Jonah
Singh, Jagmeet
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Zimmer, David

Nays

Balkissoon, Bas
Bradley, James J.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chiarelli, Bob

Hardeman, Ernie
Holiday, Douglas C.
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda

McKenna, Jane
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
O'Toole, John

Chudleigh, Ted
Dickson, Joe
Dunlop, Garfield
Fedeli, Victor

Klees, Frank
MacLaren, Jack
Mangat, Amrit
McDonnell, Jim

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Thompson, Lisa M.
Wilson, Jim
Wong, Soo

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 31; the nays are 24.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À SOUTENIR LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 30, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act / Projet de loi 105, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'impôt-santé des employeurs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I am happy to give a few brief comments on Bill 105, the supposed Supporting Small Businesses Act, but I hope to make the case that it's not doing very much for small business.

Much like my colleagues in the PC caucus who have already spoken to this issue, I would like to start by commending the Liberal government on their clever use of propaganda in naming this bill the Supporting Small Businesses Act. Anyone who has followed the policies of Premier Wynne's Liberal government knows that they have been anything but supportive of small businesses, creating just about every tax and regulation imaginable to help reduce small business to no business at all and to reach into the pockets of hard-working, productive businesses across the province.

These increases in red tape, taxes and energy costs have made it nearly impossible for many businesses to turn a profit in Ontario and have led to a decrease in the willingness of corporations and individuals to invest in this great province. When a government makes it so disadvantageous to do business that entrepreneurs who were born, raised and educated in their communities in this province believe that their only option for a profitable future is to leave, you know you have a problem.

It was the PC government who first introduced the health tax exemption in 1996, after David Peterson brought it in years earlier, as a way to provide much-needed relief to small businesses across Ontario by reducing their overall tax burden.

The Liberals have waited nearly a decade since they came into office to address and provide relief to small businesses. For many, this bill is too little, too late,

exemplifying exactly what is wrong with the Liberals' approach to governing.

The bill is merely a trivial step by a Liberal government looking to sweep a larger framework of failed policies under the carpet. It's clear that this government isn't willing to make the tough decisions that are necessary to get our economy back on track.

The bill isn't enough to solve the crippling jobs crisis we are currently facing. It won't recover the 300,000 lost manufacturing jobs, and it won't put the 600,000 Ontarians without jobs back to work.

If you want to know why we have a jobs crisis here in Ontario, look no further than to the increases in red tape, such as the College of Trades; the increases in taxes, such as the WSIB; and the astronomical increases in hydro rates. Essentially, look no further than the Liberal government.

Mr. Speaker, it's for this reason and many others that we would like this bill to go to committee; that we agree that 15 hours of debate is enough on this bill on second reading; that we would like amendments in committee that deal with the threshold, in terms of creating a bigger exemption to the employer health tax than what is envisioned in the bill, to give more relief to small businesses. Small and medium-sized businesses with less than 100 employees make up 98% of the employer base in this province.

So we agree; it will go to committee. We hope the government will accept our amendments.

We have, I can say as House leader of the Ontario PCs, no further debate on second reading. We look forward to debating this again after it comes out of committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? Further debate?

Mr. Leal has moved second reading of Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I've received a deferral slip from the chief government whip deferring this vote until Monday, November 4, at the time of deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Ms. MacCharles has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1629.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Haltoun Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (NDP)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Niagara Falls	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Steven Del Duca, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue
Soo Wong
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**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci
Laura Albanese, Rick Bartolucci
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial
sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience
intellectuelle**

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Continued from back cover

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Kimm Fletcher	
Mr. Ted Chudleigh.....	4107
Social Innovation Shared Space	
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	4107
Denturists	
Ms. Soo Wong.....	4107
Communities in Bloom awards	
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	4108
Halloween	
Mr. Michael Prue.....	4108
Colten and Luke Rybuck	
Ms. Helena Jaczek.....	4108
Allan Stanley	
Ms. Laurie Scott.....	4109
Sheridan College	
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn.....	4109
Wind turbines	
Mr. Jim Wilson.....	4109

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Lincoln Alexander Day Act, 2013, Bill 125, Mr. Arnott, Mr. Balkissoon, Mr. Paul Miller / Loi de 2013 sur le Jour de Lincoln Alexander, projet de loi 125, M. Arnott, M. Balkissoon, M. Paul Miller	
First reading agreed to.....	4109
Mr. Ted Arnott.....	4110

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Darlington nuclear generating station	
Mr. John O'Toole.....	4110
Taxation	
Ms. Sarah Campbell.....	4110
Waste reduction	
Mr. John Fraser.....	4110
Highway improvement	
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson.....	4111
Minimum wage	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	4111
Waste reduction	
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn.....	4111
Youth mental health	
Mr. Frank Klees.....	4111

Ontario Municipal Board

Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	4112
Small business	
Ms. Soo Wong.....	4112
Shale Beach	
Mr. Jim Wilson.....	4112
Community health centre	
Ms. Sarah Campbell.....	4112
Small business	
Mr. Phil McNeely.....	4113
Wind turbines	
Mr. John O'Toole.....	4113
Visitor	
Mr. Vic Dhillon.....	4113
Murray Cardiff	
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson.....	4113

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS / AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS

Manoranjana Kanagasabapathy Act (Hand-Held Devices Penalty), 2013, Bill 116, Mr. Balkissoon / Loi Manoranjana Kanagasabapathy de 2013 (peine pour conduite avec appareil portatif), projet de loi 116, M. Balkissoon	
Mr. Bas Balkissoon.....	4114
Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	4115
Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	4116
Mr. John Fraser.....	4116
Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	4117
Ms. Sarah Campbell.....	4117
Ms. Soo Wong.....	4118
Mr. John O'Toole.....	4119
Mr. Taras Natyshak.....	4119
Ms. Dipika Damerla.....	4120
Mrs. Julia Munro.....	4120
Mr. Bas Balkissoon.....	4120
Hawkins Gignac Act (Carbon Monoxide Safety), 2013, Bill 77, Mr. Hardeman / Loi Hawkins Gignac de 2013 (protection contre le monoxyde de carbone), projet de loi 77, M. Hardeman	
Mr. Ernie Hardeman.....	4121
Ms. Sarah Campbell.....	4123
Hon. Linda Jeffrey.....	4123
Mrs. Jane McKenna.....	4124
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	4125
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn.....	4126
Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	4127
Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	4127
Mr. Norm Miller.....	4128
Mr. Ernie Hardeman.....	4128

Bear control

Mr. John Vanthof.....	4129
Hon. Linda Jeffrey.....	4131
Mr. Norm Miller.....	4131
Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	4132
Mr. John Fraser.....	4133
Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	4134
Ms. Sarah Campbell.....	4135
Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette.....	4136
Mr. Michael Mantha.....	4136
Mr. John Vanthof.....	4136

Manoranjana Kanagasabapathy Act (Hand-Held Devices Penalty), 2013, Bill 116, Mr. Balkissoon / Loi Manoranjana Kanagasabapathy de 2013 (peine pour conduite avec appareil portatif), projet de loi 116, M. Balkissoon

Second reading agreed to.....	4137
-------------------------------	------

Hawkins Gignac Act (Carbon Monoxide Safety), 2013, Bill 77, Mr. Hardeman / Loi Hawkins Gignac de 2013 (protection contre le monoxyde de carbone), projet de loi 77, M. Hardeman

Second reading agreed to.....	4137
-------------------------------	------

Bear control

Motion agreed to.....	4138
-----------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR**Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013, Bill 105, Mr. Sousa / Loi de 2013 visant à soutenir les petites entreprises, projet de loi 105, M. Sousa**

Mr. Jim Wilson.....	4138
Second reading vote deferred.....	4138

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 31 October 2013 / Jeudi 31 octobre 2013

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Waste Reduction Act, 2013, Bill 91, Mr. Bradley / Loi de 2013 sur la réduction des déchets, projet de loi 91, M. Bradley	
Mr. Frank Klees	4085
Mme France Gélinas	4086
Hon. John Gerretsen	4086
Mr. John O'Toole	4087
Mr. Michael Mantha	4087
Mr. Frank Klees	4087
Mr. Taras Natyshak	4088
Mr. Phil McNeely	4089
Mr. Michael Harris	4089
Mr. John Vanthof	4090
Hon. John Gerretsen	4090
Mr. Taras Natyshak	4090
Mr. Ted Arnott	4091
Mme France Gélinas	4092
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	4093
Mr. John O'Toole	4093
Mr. Paul Miller	4093
Mr. Ted Arnott	4094
Mme France Gélinas	4094
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	4095

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	4095
Hon. Michael Chan	4095
Mr. Monte McNaughton	4095
Mr. John Vanthof	4095
Hon. Jeff Leal	4095
Mrs. Jane McKenna	4096
Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield	4096
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	4096
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	4096
Mr. Robert Bailey	4096
M. Taras Natyshak	4096
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	4096
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	4096

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Ontario economy	
Mr. Tim Hudak	4096
Hon. Charles Sousa	4096

Power plants	
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	4097
Hon. John Milloy	4097

Hydro rates	
Mr. Peter Tabuns	4098
Hon. John Milloy	4098
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	4099

Automobile insurance	
Mr. Gilles Bisson	4099
Hon. Charles Sousa	4099

Public transit	
Mr. Frank Klees	4100
Hon. Glen R. Murray	4100

Ontario Municipal Board	
Mr. Rosario Marchese	4101
Hon. Linda Jeffrey	4101

Small business	
Mr. Grant Crack	4101
Hon. Eric Hoskins	4102

Drive Clean	
Mr. Michael Harris	4102
Hon. James J. Bradley	4102

Bear control	
Mr. John Vanthof	4103
Hon. Michael Gravelle	4103

Arts and cultural funding	
Mr. Bob Delaney	4104
Hon. Michael Chan	4104

Pension plans	
Mrs. Julia Munro	4104
Hon. Charles Sousa	4104

Cancer treatment	
Mr. Taras Natyshak	4105
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4105

Northern Ontario development	
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	4105
Hon. Michael Gravelle	4105

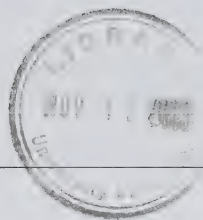
Snowmobiling	
Mr. Jim Wilson	4106
Hon. Glen R. Murray	4106

Affordable housing	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	4107
Hon. Linda Jeffrey	4107

Continued on inside back cover

CA20N
X 1
- D23

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Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative
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Deuxième session, 40^e législature

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 4 November 2013

Lundi 4 novembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 4 November 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 4 novembre 2013

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would like to introduce today as guests, in the members' gallery, Arijana Tomicic and Dave Jones of Family and Children's Services of Renfrew County, who are having a day with MPPs here at Queen's Park today.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: I too wanted to welcome very, very special people today. Colette Prévost is the executive director of the Children's Aid Society of the Districts of Sudbury and Manitoulin, and she is joined by two board members, René Quesnelle and Vincent Lacroix. We'd like to welcome them and thank them for everything that they do.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm proud to welcome my wife, Kate Bartz, to the Legislature, and our 12-year-old—12-week-old baby, Annie-Grace Bartz McNaughton.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The jokes write themselves, so I'll leave it alone.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Today we have the family of page captain Tristan Winfield-Hicks. We have Andrea Hicks, mother; Claudia Winfield-Hicks, sister; Natalie Winfield-Hicks, sister; Françoise Bélanger; Christian Roux; and Eddythe Winfield. Welcome.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome the executive director of the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa, present in Queen's Park today, Barbara MacKinnon. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to welcome Mary Ballantyne, executive director of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies; Marilyn Dumaresq, the board president; and local representatives: Phyllis Lovell, the executive director; David Wyles, board member; and Gary Harron, chairperson, from the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Joining us in the members' gallery is Mr. Robert Richardson, the hard-working and dedicated executive director of the Children's Aid Society of the District of Thunder Bay. Welcome, Rob.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to introduce two special guests to me. My wife, Jenn, and my daughter Maggie are here for a visit.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce my new legislative assistant, who I've hired

from Thunder Bay. Denny Timm is joining me, my first staff person at Queen's Park. Welcome.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, being of Grenadian heritage, it gives me extreme pleasure to welcome the Consul General of the beautiful country of Grenada; Mrs. Jenny Gumbs is here today at the Legislature.

Also, from the beautiful riding of Don Valley East, I'd like to welcome the students of Cassandra Public School, the first school, I believe, in the city of Toronto to reach its platinum ecoschool status.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to introduce in the west members' gallery Jennifer Wilson, the executive director of Kawartha-Haliburton Children's Aid Society—thank you for standing—and Lisa Major-Gage, supervisor at Kawartha-Haliburton Children's Aid Society. Thank you very much for coming and welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, would you please help me welcome Mary-Stewart Ross, who's the chair of the Family and Children's Services of Frontenac, Lennox and Addington, a county in my area, as well as Steve Woodman, the executive director.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to welcome Simcoe county children's aid society executive director Susan Carmichael; a board member and foster parent, Dave MacPherson; and Jessica Morgan to the Legislature today.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I would like to introduce the executive director of the Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians, Mr. Ron Southwell, and Rory Demetrio. With them are Jody Carrick, Elise Wickett, Stacey Huneke, Brenda Duff, Kerri Vivian and Sandra Lean-Leighton. I invite everyone to join them for a reception tonight in the dining room from 5:30 on.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to welcome representatives of the York Region Children's Aid Society this morning: Mr. Patrick Lake, executive director; Jennifer Grant, director of communication; and board member Darryl Wolk.

Mr. Michael Prue: I would like to welcome the children and teachers of Parkside public school, who, if they're not here yet, will be here soon.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to introduce Dylan Attack. He's here with his mother, Kerry Attack, and his aunt Kathy MacDonald. Dylan recently won the first ever Michael V. Young "What Ya Gotta Do" Award from the Hamilton Tiger-Cats. The award is given to someone within the regional football community who inspires others with their actions and their attitude. Thank you, Dylan, for all your hard work, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, we have a South Cayuga family in the members' gallery: May Lynne and Brian Ricker; their children Silken and Theo. They're all related to our page, Owen Ricker. Owen's the third page in his family, preceded by Gemma and Bethany.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Speaker, as you've heard through some individual introductions, today we're joined by a number of representatives from across the province from CASs. I'd like to welcome everyone to the House, and I'd like to thank them for the important work that they do every day, and to invite everyone to join us at the reception directly after question period.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to welcome Abram Benedict from the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne from my riding. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: From the Children's Aid Society of London and Middlesex, I'd like to welcome Jane Fitzgerald and Walter LeGrow. Welcome.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome the chair of the Highland Shores Children's Aid society, Mark Kartusch, and the chair, Darcey French, joining us as well.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today Stephen Adler, who's the associate director, Ontario government relations, Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs. And from the Jewish Family and Child service, we have Richard Cummings, the executive director; the chair of the board, Alan Levine; Talyah Breslin, the director of client services; and we also have Sarina Rehal, assistant director, community relations and outreach of CIJA. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to extend a special welcome to grade 5 students from St. Nicholas Catholic Elementary School in Newmarket. They are visiting the House today and are accompanied by their teacher, Catherine Barrett.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I, too, would like to welcome representatives from Family and Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County who are here today: Erin Harvey and Jan Lord.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I, too, would like to welcome our local children's aid society—Gisele Hebert and Rick Vanderlee—to the gallery.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the member from Essex, visiting Benjamin Diab is his mother, Nancy Diab, who is here in the public gallery as well.

We welcome all of our guests.

Just before we get started, I wanted to point out that although we have five minutes set aside for introductions, usually on special days there are a lot of people who we need to introduce. I've made it my commitment to try to have everyone introduce all of their guests, as long as everyone stays to the script of doing the introduction and avoids long dissertations. I appreciate your co-operation on that. We will get everyone introduced because it's a special moment for everyone to visit.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Premier. My question is for you. Don Drummond outlined some big-ticket reforms that he said will be "an important turning point in the province's history." Don Drummond called for a "sharp degree of fiscal restraint." He said you must act "swiftly and boldly." To balance the budget will require "tough decisions." He said the treatment will be "difficult" and "most of the burden ... must fall on spending." He called for "a wrenching reduction from the path that spending is now on."

Premier, does any of this sound even remotely familiar? Can you name even one bold, sweeping move that you've made to balance the budget by 2017-18?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the member opposite knows that we have implemented over 60% of what Don Drummond recommended, and that has meant that our annual rate of less than 1% on average in program spending has been in place. So we have in fact taken very serious measures to make sure that we constrain spending.

I would suggest that if he was looking for dramatic improvement, he had only to look at the compensation discussions that we had last year with the broader public service to see that there was dramatic action taken, which is why we are overachieving on all of those deficit reduction targets.

What we will not do is cancel full-day kindergarten and fire 10,000 education workers, fire hospital workers. That's not what we're going to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, I'll let the 40 nurses in North Bay who you just fired hear your comment.

There are two parts to any formula to get us out of this massive deficit hole that you've dug: increased revenues and reduced spending. The Bank of Canada told us that this year and next year will not see the growth that you've forecasted. So unless you're planning another secret tax hike, that side of the formula is not moving. That leaves us to reducing spending.

I'll give you another Drummond quote. He said, "The government must take daring fiscal action early." Premier, that was 20 months ago. We've not seen one of Drummond's bold, daring, big, sweeping moves that he has asked for. So I'll ask you again: Can you name even one single bold spending reduction that you've made to balance the budget by 2017-18?

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting. My colleagues are calling out the changes that we have made, whether it's physiotherapy, whether it's transforming the health care system.

The reality the member opposite doesn't understand is that when you do transform a system, there are changes that are painful. So taking services out of hospitals and

putting them into the community—that creates a challenge for some people.

He's going to have to pick a lane. He's going to have to decide whether transformation is what they support or whether the status quo is actually what they support, because when he talks about not creating any turmoil, not creating any real change, which is what transformation does, then he does not understand that if we don't do that, we cannot have a sustainable health care system, a sustainable government over the long term.

We have taken those actions. We've implemented over 60% of what Don Drummond recommended, but we're not going to fire 10,000 education workers, which is what he's advocating.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, with your government's fall economic statement due out this week, your record is already shaky. You've already told us you're going to miss your economic growth forecast. That means you're going to miss your revenue targets, too.

Now, we've seen this Liberal movie before. In 2011, revenues were down \$500 million, so you drew from the contingency fund by nearly the same amount so the deficit would not appear to increase.

Premier, I have a simple question for you. Will you be drawing from the contingency fund again this year to make up for your missed revenue targets?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, spending was down for the first time last year since 1996. We have constrained spending and we have done that at least in part by implementing the recommendations of the Drummond report. My expectation would have been that they would have been supportive of that, that the opposition would have thought that that was a very good idea.

We did that while maintaining services, and that is the crux; that's the crux of the difference between our approach and their approach. They are not advocating maintaining services; they're advocating cutting services. That is how they have behaved in the past; that is what the PCs would do in the future. They would cut services; they would cut people from those services; they would cut people who deliver those services. We're not going to do that.

We believe that maintaining those services and making sure that our education system and our health care system are excellent is exactly what the people of Ontario need while we constrain spending. That's what we've been doing.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Again, I will remind those 40 nurses in North Bay whom you cut of your statement.

Premier, last week you announced a new bond issue to add to our debt. You've already added \$20 billion to our debt this year alone. When your government took office, our debt in Ontario was \$139 billion. It took 137 years to

get there. In the last 10 years, you've doubled it to \$273 billion.

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes, they did overachieve.

So instead of eliminating scandalous and wasteful spending, you've simply answered, "More debt."

My question this time will be a very simple one. Premier, just how much debt are you planning to add with this new bond issue?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There is a stark difference between the way the party opposite approaches the delivery of service and governing in this province and what we believe, Mr. Speaker. That is just the reality. We have said that we believe that the people of Ontario need to have the services that are delivered by our education system, by our health care system, the social services that lift people up and allow them to get into the workforce, the infrastructure that is necessary for communities to be able to draw business to their regions so that they can thrive. We believe that those investments in people, those investments in infrastructure and the support of a dynamic business environment is what the people of Ontario expect from us. They do not expect across-the-board cuts that are going to reduce those services to people in North Bay and across the province. They do not expect that's what their government will undertake, and that's not what we're going to do. We'll constrain spending and we'll deliver services.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, these non-answers are not exactly breeding confidence among the investment community. You haven't been able to answer even the simplest question here today. Your forecast shows revenue up, yet the Bank of Canada says revenue will not be growing where you hoped. Your lack of a jobs plan can be blamed on that. Your forecast shows spending flattening, yet you've increased wages in eight out of 10 contracts that you've negotiated.

Premier, none of this is adding up. I ask you, please, one time, please tell us: How are you going to balance the budget when you've failed miserably on both sides of the formula? It's a simple question, Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Our deficit has continually come down. This is the fourth year in a row that we are achieving above our target, that we are outstripping our target, so I'm not exactly sure what the member opposite is referring to when says that we're not on target; we are. We're ahead of our target, and we are going to continue to behave in that prudent and constrained way.

At the same time, we believe that in order for the economy to thrive, we have to deal with the investments that are needed in order to support people, including, for example, the youth employment strategy that I think already has more than 2,400 young people who have

been placed in positions. That's the kind of investment and support that people need in order to be able to thrive.

1050

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We will continue to make those investments. The member opposite is part of a party that doesn't believe in investment, including investment in infrastructure and transit. They would cut that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm very disturbed at the lack of answers today, particularly when this party has added \$20 billion to our debt this year alone. We're seeing more spin and absolutely no answers.

So, Speaker, let's review: You can't tell the markets how much debt you plan to issue this year. Revenues will not meet your forecast this year. You haven't implemented the "fundamental spending reforms" that Don Drummond has called for.

How can anyone take this party seriously? How can anyone have any confidence in your plan or your numbers? So let's try for the sixth time. Tell us, how do you plan on balancing the budget by 2017-18, or are you going to make that up, too?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the member opposite is looking forward to the fall economic statement on Thursday, and we look forward to sharing that information with him.

Let's review, as he has said: We have an economic plan to drive jobs and growth. Our deficit has continually come down. This is the fourth year in a row that we're projecting to be ahead of the target. We're ahead of the targets that we set. We're the only government in Canada to achieve this. Last year, we had an improvement of \$5 billion over our target. We're taking a balanced approach—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew will come to order: second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:—and we have implemented 60% of what Don Drummond put in place, what he recommended to us, which is why our spending has been constrained, which is why we have been able to over-achieve on our targets.

We will continue in that manner. We will be prudent and we will continue to make those investments that are necessary in order for this economy to thrive.

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. As the Premier knows, a lot of Ontarians don't know how they'll make ends meet when it comes to the time to retire. This is a challenge that has been building for some time. Three years ago, I put a motion before the House calling on the government to get moving on a

plan, and every single Liberal MPP in the House voted against it.

Can the Premier explain what the government plans to do now that they didn't manage to do over the last decade in office?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Three years ago, on this side of the House, we were advocating for an enhancement to the CPP. Our Minister of Finance was leading that charge across the country. We continue to do that.

We're not going to take lessons from the NDP on how to put that argument forward. We have been putting that argument forward. We continue to do that. I have said that in the absence of that progress, in the absence of a consensus across the country, we will develop a plan and know the ramifications of having an Ontario plan.

But our first choice is to have the federal government step up to its responsibility and work with the provinces and enhance the CPP so that people in this country will know what their retirement will be and they will have some security in that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think people may be looking pretty cynically at the government's latest promises, since they consist of a lot of talk, while people have been waiting years for some action. Over the last week, the government, in one way or another, has said they're ready to get behind a private sector solution, a federal government solution or an Ontario solution. But every time, the details are sketchy.

Can the Premier give us any insights into how much she thinks people should be putting aside, what an adequate retirement income would look like and whether she prefers expanded public or private plans?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, I want to give credit to the finance ministers from across the country who met, under the leadership of Charles Sousa, our finance minister, to come to some agreement that we do need to make this argument to the federal government. I'm very pleased that the leader of the NDP, who has not mentioned this issue for a very long time—certainly, in none of the meetings that I had with her did she raise this as an issue. This has been a concern of mine from the time I came into this office. I raised it at the Council of the Federation. It's something that I think is extremely important, and we have been advocating for enhancement of the CPP for years. We will continue to do that. Our Minister of Finance is having some success across the country with the ministers of finance. We look forward to the leader of the NDP's support on this file.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People are getting more and more cynical about a government that's scrambling to hold onto power with a lot of promises, a lot of panels and a lot of conversation while the problems they've ignored for 10 years still are not getting resolved. They don't need endless conversations and empty Liberal promises. We know the Premier knows how to strike a panel, but when will things actually change for people?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm not sure exactly how the leader of the third party would suggest we get consensus on enhancement of the CPP across the country unless we talk about it with the other provinces, and that's exactly what's happening. We are having that discussion, and there is some traction that has been achieved. The ministers of finance met last week, and I believe that there is more consensus than there was before.

So that's a very good thing. We've been advocating for this. This is our first choice: that the federal government work with the provinces and that we have an enhanced CPP across the country. I look forward to the leader of the third party working with us and working with her federal counterpart to make sure the opposition in Ottawa is singing from the same song book as she is.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. For people facing real challenges, the Liberal government offers a lot of talk but very little by way of results. A growing number of drivers are concerned that the Liberals are backtracking on commitments to bring down auto insurance rates.

Ellie from Windsor wrote, "[I] just got my insurance renewal. It went up \$20. Note on first page about a new 2% charge for people on a payment plan." If the government is saying rates are coming down, why are people still seeing increases and new charges on their bills?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We're not backing off on our commitment. We've been very clear that we are moving ahead. We're working with the industry and we are making changes that in fact are bearing results. We know that the fraud within the system—the recommendations of the fraud task force need to be implemented. That's what we're doing.

As I have said to the leader of the third party many times, this is not a change that happens overnight. We have set a target of an 8% reduction in the first year, and we are working towards that. But it would be very helpful if the leader of the third party could make sure that she understands that it is across the province that this has to happen and it is the industry that has to take part. We are working with them, and we will see that change.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Families across Ontario are wondering if Liberal talk will actually apply to them and they're wondering if they will actually see the savings that they were promised.

Robert from London wrote, "In September of this year (2013) they raised my car insurance by about 16% to 17%.... If there is a 15% reduction in car insurance rates anytime soon then it will be a [moot] point because they already raised it to cover the extra expenses."

People are wondering if the Liberal government will keep its word. Can the Premier tell us whether rates for drivers like Robert will start coming down?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I know that the leader of the third party understands that this is an across-

the-board initiative. It means that, across the board, a 15% average deduction is what we are targeting. So I think it would be very helpful if the leader of the third party helped the people who call her to understand that and to understand exactly how it works, because I think oversimplifying the issue does not help individuals.

We have set a target of an 8% reduction in the first year. Already, FSCO reports that there has been a 0.7% reduction in the third quarter of 2013. The rates, on average, are going in the right direction. But as I say, oversimplifying the time that it takes to make a change like this and what the implications are for individual drivers is not helpful. We are on it; we are working; we will make that reduction across the board.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I could tell the Premier that endlessly talking about a problem and never solving it just doesn't cut it with the people either.

Peter in Mississauga says this: "[W]hen I got my auto insurance quote in August this year, I was really astonished when I saw my premium was increased almost 15%, not decreased! Up to date I haven't got any ticket[s] or any car accidents for years."

People like Peter and Robert and Ellie are watching their bills go up instead of going down. We've heard a lot of excuses from the Liberal government. When are people actually going to start seeing some results?

1100

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said, according to FSCO, auto insurance rates decreased by 0.7% in the third quarter of 2013. Overall, the direction is the right one. The anti-fraud task force is creating new licences for clinics and exploring further options. That rooting out of the fraud and making the changes that are going to bring those rates down takes time. It's very important that we do it in such a way that we actually get the causes for the increases out of the system. That's why we have set an 8% target for reduction in the first year.

I look forward to working with the leader of the third party. We both know this is an important issue. People need to see those reductions but they will be average reductions, so that means they will be reductions across the whole system.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, five days ago you joined this assembly in a standing ovation for Kimm Fletcher, a mother of two with brain cancer. Later, in a private meeting, you promised to review her file to investigate why she's being denied OHIP coverage for the drug Avastin, a drug she so desperately needs.

Minister, it is now five days since you made that promise to Kimm. To put things in perspective, five days comes out to about 10% of her medically predicted life expectancy. On Kimm's behalf, I ask if the minister has in fact reviewed the file.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can confirm that the Committee to Evaluate Drugs has twice done a formal and thorough review. In addition, in 2013, in response to another application, they did look again. They did determine that there is no new evidence.

I think it's very important that everyone in this House acknowledges that we do have a protocol in place, a protocol that removes political interference from decisions around what drugs are funded and for whom.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm sure the member opposite actually wants to hear the answer to this.

I would note that Health Canada—

Interjections.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The heckling is unfortunate, I must say, Speaker. This is a very serious case.

It should be noted that Avastin for GBM currently has only a conditional notice of compliance from Health Canada because there are no data demonstrating an improvement in disease-related symptoms or increased survival with Avastin in the treatment of GBM.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Minister, Ontario is the only province in Canada with that system in place. This drug is in British Columbia, it's in Alberta, it's in Manitoba for this purpose.

Kimm doesn't have the luxury of time. Time is slipping away from her. Her husband and her two children stand by helplessly, frustrated that a government which intervenes with over \$1 billion for gas plants when it is politically expedient for its own survival refuses to intervene to assist Kimm in her survival.

Minister, I'll be speaking with Kimm later today to give her an update on her file. Please tell me what I can tell her with respect to your efforts as Minister of Health for this province and what you can do on her behalf.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I have said, we have taken the politics out of determining what drugs are covered for what condition. I cannot interfere in a decision made by a panel of experts, both at the Health Canada level and at the Ontario Committee to Evaluate Drugs. It's a transparent process. People can go online and determine where in the process the approval is at the Committee to Evaluate Drugs, and when a decision is made, it is online, publicly available—the rationale behind what decisions are made.

I would invite the member opposite to review the data on this, to review the research. I know that that is not what the member opposite wants to hear but we must, as stewards of the system, rely on experts to make determinations about what drugs will benefit what patients.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question today is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Good morning, Minister.

Last Friday, you announced you'd heard enough and were ordering the deficient girders removed from the Herb Gray Parkway. First let me say, on behalf of the residents in that area, thank you. It was the right thing to do.

However, there are other issues that need to be addressed. Mistakes were made; standards were not met; rules were ignored. As the member from Essex has already pointed out, this was a complete failure of oversight and quality control by this government.

Can the minister assure the public today that cost overruns will not have the people of Ontario footing the bill because of this unmitigated fiasco?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Good morning to the member from Windsor—Tecumseh. I thank him for the civility that he's bringing to this House.

Mr. Speaker, this wasn't a disaster at all. Let's just review the important facts of this.

One, all of the girders are coming out, as a result of independent testing. That is going to cost the taxpayers absolutely nothing—zero.

I know that members opposite—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound will come to order.

Laughter.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Well, it may be funny, but you'll be laughing somewhere else.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The way the government designed the contract assigned all risk allocation.

The Premier has asked me and other ministers to get on top of files. If we're cancelling projects, it should be done early. If we're making adjustments, we should be the aggressive watchdogs of capital projects. This is a government that learns from its mistakes, and this is an example of that learning.

Minor delays—as a matter of fact, we will be advancing the local road projects to reconnect communities even ahead of schedule. It will come in on budget. It will be entirely safe and meet engineering standards, and the risk and costs go to Project Co, not the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The minister can talk about aggressive watchdogs. The facts are that we learned of this massive screw-up because of a whistle-blower. The government was forced to take action because of the public outcry.

There are a number of other P3 projects under way in this province, and the frightening thing is, the system of oversight is the same on those projects as on the Herb Gray Parkway, meaning there is none.

Will the minister—will this government—admit that contracting out billion-dollar privatized projects to foreign construction firms without oversight just doesn't work, and saying that taxpayers won't be on the hook for these overruns won't work without government oversight either?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: There was, sadly, when this was going on, no public outcry; that was the point. It was

actually my colleague the member from Windsor West, the Minister of Children and Youth Services, who approached me early on after I was appointed and advised me that there were concerns she was hearing about, and I held meetings with key people in the Windsor area.

What is surprising, Mr. Speaker, is that even his party and the opposition never raised this issue in the last 18 months. If this was a known problem, then how could a party with so many seats in that area not be raising those questions?

I've given credit to the member from Windsor—Tecumseh because it was only since he was elected—and my colleague from Windsor West actually raised this issue. As soon as we became aware of it, we acted aggressively to resolve it, to resolve the safety standards, to ensure that this project—and we have successfully advocated for the bridge to be built, which will now be attached. This is one of the best things to happen in Windsor in many years.

CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The first co-operative housing building in the city of Toronto was established in my riding of York South–Weston, a residence called Beech Hall. It was a real innovative model at that time, and the residents of what is known today as the Beech Hall Housing Co-operative successfully fought off a city bid to turn the residence into a high-rise. There's even a great documentary that can be watched on this. It's called *The Battle of Beech Hall*, and it depicts the struggle of the residents.

Since then, many more co-op homes have been built in my riding and across the province. These homes play an important role in affordable housing, and there are certain ridings, such as mine, where they are important to a great number of people. But for years co-ops were treated differently from rental housing, forcing co-ops to go through a complex and expensive dispute resolution process.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Our government has reduced the cost of this process across the province. Could the minister explain what changes have taken place?

1110

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank my colleague for this timely question and for her continued advocacy, obviously, for the people of Beech Hall and the residents of co-operative housing in general.

As we all know, co-op housing plays an important and very necessary role in providing affordable housing to Ontarians. That's why our government worked recently with our co-operative housing partners to come up with a streamlined, less costly, less time-consuming process for dispute resolution. As you'll recall, our changes to Bill 14 helped co-operatives across the province, from Beech Hall in York South–Weston to Falls Place, a co-op in Niagara Falls, which no longer have to go through a six-

month process that can cost upwards of \$5,000, preventing co-ops from investing in necessary maintenance or upgrades such as playgrounds. It also ensures that co-ops and their members are able to access the same protections and benefits that have been available to landlords and tenants, such as mediation.

Our government will continue to invest in safe and affordable housing for all Ontarians so that they can put their skills to work and continue to build in the growth of our economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you to the minister for that answer. However, Beech Hall and other co-ops today are experiencing a crisis, in Beech Hall's case, a crisis they haven't seen the likes of since the 1970s, when the Toronto borough of York decided to phase out this complex in favour of a new development.

The federal government has provided assistance to co-ops and other housing providers through programs started in the 1970s and the 1980s. Unfortunately, these agreements are expiring and we are quickly approaching the day when most of these contracts will end. And though our government has committed \$3 billion in affordable housing funding, communities across Ontario need predictable funding for affordable housing from all three levels of government.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could she please explain to the House what our government is doing to ensure that we have a strong long-term partner in the federal government so that Ontario's co-ops can have the predictable funding that they need?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Thank you to the member for the question. Investing in affordable housing, such as co-ops, we all know pays dividends long down the road in creating jobs for Ontarians while continuing to provide housing for Ontario's most vulnerable for decades to come.

But protecting our societal responsibility for the vulnerable takes all three levels of government to make it work. We need to work co-operatively. A few months ago I listened very intently to what the federal government said in their throne speech to hear about their future plans for affordable housing across Canada. The federal government announced its intention to work on a renewed homeless partnering strategy. That's good news and I was pleased to hear that, but I remain worried in their commitment over the long term. It looks like their commitment to affordable housing will evaporate over the next 20 years. That's why I urge our federal partners to come back to the table to ensure that Ontario and all provinces across Canada have long-term, sustainable funding so that we can make the necessary investments that Canadians and Ontarians expect.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Premier, because your government has spent Ontario into a fiscal mess, you said you needed to put a cap on our Risk Management Program,

the insurance program that our farmers depend on. This year farmers in need are seeing the negative impact. How do you explain to these farmers that there's no more money to help them, but you were able to find enough money to increase salaries and benefits at OMAFRA by more than 4%?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have worked very closely with representatives from the agriculture industry, with individual farmers, and we have really made huge advancements in terms of the risk management programs that are in place. I would look at the corn-fed-beef ledger that my predecessor worked on with the sector. Producers are very, very pleased with the opportunity to have that kind of security in the system.

They're also very pleased—and I know that the member opposite is aware of the Open for Business table that we've got in place. They're very pleased at the movement on regulations and the changes that we've put in place to allow the agri-food business to flourish. So I think we're seeing a lot of successes, both in the stability of the risk management programs and in the opening up of the regulatory process so that businesses can thrive.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Premier, we need to get Ontario's finances back on track so that we can afford to provide the services Ontarians rely on, like health care, education and, for our farmers, insurance programs.

The Minister of Finance said, "We can't manage the deficit without addressing what is the single biggest line in our budget—public sector compensation." You claim you have a wage freeze, but the ministry under your direct control is increasing wages and benefits by more than \$3.6 million. To me, a wage freeze doesn't mean a 4% increase in salaries.

Premier, on November 7, will you commit to tabling a real plan to address Ontario's financing, including a real wage freeze, or do you think it's okay for farmers to continue to suffer because of your government's fiscal mismanagement?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure exactly whether the member opposite is really concerned about the well-being of farmers in the province or whether he's just taking a political shot. The fact is, we have worked with the sector. Ontario and Quebec are the only provinces to establish a provincial program to supplement what is available to farmers through the federal Business Risk Management Program. We have worked to put in place programs in this province that supplement what they get from the federal government, and in fact we've done that in collaboration with the sector. So I hope that the member opposite will sit down with us.

If he'd like a review of all of the programs that we've put in place, that we have negotiated and collaborated with the sector on, I'm happy to give him that.

On February 20, I met with some of the community leaders. I heard from them the overwhelming support for the process that we put in place to put these programs in place. So I look forward to working—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the minister responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games. The scope and responsibility for security for the Pan/Parapan American Games has been less than clear. The minister has refused to answer even the most basic questions, either demonstrating an enormous lack of knowledge or a frightening focus on secrecy.

Speaker, will the minister agree to provide MPPs with all records and set out the security structure and costs, as well as the plan by which offices and officials will decide how security is carried out before, during and after the TO2015 Pan/Parapan American Games?

Hon. Michael Chan: I'm pleased to answer the question from the member opposite. Speaker, the Pan and Parapan American Games is a huge undertaking by the province, and, come 2015, 41 countries and their competitors will be in Ontario. The Pan Am Games has also a large footprint involving 14 municipalities.

Of course, we're committed to making sure that people visiting this country will be safe and, domestically, our people are also safe. The safety of athletes, coaches, officials, visitors and the general public is a critical element in the planning of the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games. We are prepared to take any measures necessary to ensure the safety of our citizens. We will not take risks with people's safety.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm not quite sure I got an answer there.

As MPPs in Ontario, we want to assure our constituents that the problems that occurred during the G20 don't happen again. We need to know the law enforcement organizations involved, who is leading the process and how any security problems will be handled, so that there is proper treatment of citizens, Pan Am participants and law enforcement personnel.

Speaker, will this minister share the basic security information so that transparency is preserved and problems are prevented?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you again for the question. Security planning for the Pan and Parapan American Games began in October 2010. It is crucial to the success of the games.

The process is being led by the integrated security unit under the management of the Ontario Provincial Police. The ISU is comprised of a team of law enforcement and security experts from each municipality hosting a games venue.

The ISU is working in coordination with federal security departments to promote the safety and security of these games. The ISU and Toronto 2015 continue to work together on games delivery plans with a view to managing security costs and risk.

1120

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. Ontario is recognized for its well-regarded academic and research institutions and their ability to collaborate with industry. Fostering collaboration is important to our competitive advantage in the global economy. We need to continue to create the right conditions that will lead to innovative breakthroughs that attract investment and create jobs for Ontarians.

To help translate Ontario's research strengths into strong innovation and commercialization activity, businesses must be able to access the valuable knowledge and expertise available in Ontario's research institutions.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Research and Innovation, what steps has the government taken to facilitate knowledge mobilization between industry and academic institutions?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I would like to thank the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for that very important question. Our government recognizes the importance of strong relationships between our academic and research institutions and industry. That's why our government has created the Collaboration Voucher program. This program provides redeemable credits to small and medium-sized enterprises for services and resources from universities, colleges and research hospitals.

Just last week, I announced the latest initiative between the Ontario Centres of Excellence, which runs the voucher program, and the Quebec Consortium for Drug Discovery. The \$3-million interprovincial research and development challenge will provide an opportunity for Ontario organizations to work with industry organizations in Quebec to promote research and innovation in new methods and discoveries.

We are proud of our government's initiative for fostering research and innovation, collaboration and also mobilization of knowledge in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. I'm happy to hear of the initiatives our government is undertaking to create stronger collaboration between innovative businesses, industry and academic institutions.

In York region, regional innovation centres like ventureLAB have played a vital role in providing services that connect and mentor entrepreneurs who want to start or grow their global enterprises. International research collaboration is a core component of research activity, as collaboration provides opportunities to move further and faster by working with other leading people in their field.

Although Ontario's research community is the strongest in Canada and one of the largest in North America, it faces fierce competition from developing economies that are ramping up their research investments.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Research and Innovation, can you please let us know what international partnerships and collaborations our government has undertaken to promote research?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank, again, the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for that question. Our government understands the importance of international collaboration to build bridges with our international partners in order for Ontario to remain competitive on the world stage. Ontario has several active memoranda of understanding that focus on promoting research and innovation and collaboration with other jurisdictions.

We have a strong working relationship with many developed and developing countries around the world, including India, China, Israel and Singapore, among many others. International agreements will help our research institutions to collaborate with scientists and researchers in other countries in order to benefit our researchers in Ontario as well and help us to grow our economy. Our government is strengthening its relationships with international partners to create innovative research solutions to common research interests and concerns.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Premier. Premier, last week I spoke to you about passing Bill 69, prompt payment legislation, an important bill. This morning, I'd like to speak with you about another important reform in the labour file and something that the majority of Ontario residents are asking for: transparency and accountability.

Last week, through Quebec's Charbonneau Commission, we learned of union dues being used to rebuild a biker strip club, false expense claims totalling more than \$4,000 for a single union executive member and, of course, plenty of connections between union bosses and organized crime.

Premier, what are you doing to ensure Ontario union dues are being used in a transparent and accountable manner and not being misspent and misappropriated?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I appreciate the member opposite asking the question. He's obviously talking about facts that are being discussed in Quebec and in other provinces. There is no such evidence of any such activity in our province.

But I think what's hidden behind the question that the member opposite has proposed going forward is their constant attack on organized trade unions in our province, their ongoing effort to bring everybody in Ontario down to make sure that the wages of hard-working Ontarians get lower and lower as opposed to making sure that we're all reaching for the top and ensuring that everybody's working together and our workplaces have health and safety for every single worker, unionized and non-unionized.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: Here in Ontario, we have seen our share of interesting union causes as well. We have seen public sector unions using hard-earned dues to pay for anti-bottled-water campaigns, to fund student protests in Quebec, to support anti-Israel campaigns and to fund G20 protestors here in Toronto. This explains why public sector union bosses have fought so hard against any disclosure law that their own membership supports in droves.

In a recent survey done by Leger Marketing, 83% of Canadians agreed that unions should be required to disclose detailed financial information on a regular basis.

Premier, we know that you take your counsel from one union boss in the province of Ontario: That's Pat Dillon and the Working Families coalition. Are you willing to side with ordinary Ontario residents and move forward by requiring public sector unions to be open and transparent as to where and how they're spending their own members' dues?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No. Stop. I didn't ask you to be seated to get quiet only to start heckling again. Stop, please.

Minister.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I'm really having a hard time believing that in 2013 we're getting a question like that from the opposition party, Speaker.

On this side of the House, we absolutely reject any notion about right to work for less. I know this is unfortunately the position of the official opposition. We believe that unions have an important role to play in our economy. They work hard towards ensuring that the wages of all workers go up.

We have seen the result of right-to-work-for-less types of policies in the United States. They create huge inequalities when it comes to lowering wages and benefits for both unionized and non-unionized workers. On top of this, the kind of policy the member opposite is proposing is going to result in more economic uncertainty in our province, and less investors will be interested in investing in the economy. We reject that.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. This past weekend, the Premier's spokesperson not only insisted that the Fort Erie Race Track didn't have a future, but also tried to rewrite its past. "For the vast majority of the Fort Erie Race Track's existence, it ran as a festival meet," he said.

Now, this government's attitude is a slap in the face to all those horsemen and women, like the families who joined me here last week, who for decades have made that track what it is today.

Why is this government destroying the horse racing industry in Fort Erie while favouring the interests of big, for-profit racetracks at Woodbine?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I guess I would ask the leader of the third party why she's advancing a notion of bad public policy that was unaccountable, was not transparent and was not working, in terms of good expenditure of public dollars. I would ask her what her plan would be to put in place a transparent, accountable plan.

We have one, Mr. Speaker. We worked with Elmer Buchanan and with John Snobelen and with John Wilkinson. They put recommendations forward. We're investing \$400 million over five years to put a sustainable horse racing industry in place, and that can include Fort Erie. Fort Erie will need to work with the Ontario Racing Commission to determine what its future will be.

My hope is that the leader of the third party, and all of her members who are so concerned about this, will be giving advice to the folks at Fort Erie that they would work with the Ontario Racing Commission. That's certainly what we're saying to the folks at Fort Erie.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

1130

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What we don't understand over here is why the Liberal government would throw out the baby with the bathwater and favour private sector solutions, throwing tens of thousands of people in rural Ontario out of work in their closing of the Slots at Race-tracks Program.

The Premier talks about there being a future for Fort Erie, but then she turns around and undermines that very future—what the entire community has worked for in terms of a future—while at the same time rolling out the red carpet for private casinos in communities that don't even want them and, at the same time, sending Fort Erie's race days over to Woodbine, a for-profit track.

The government has already admitted that the OLG privatization was a mistake. Why is the Premier favouring for-profit racetracks at the expense of an entire horse racing industry in Fort Erie?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I will say that I understand the politics of what the leader of the third party is doing. I understand the politics that overlay her questions about Fort Erie, but what we have done is we have taken advice from knowledgeable people who worked across the system, across the province. We talked to thousands of people in the horse racing industry. We're putting a plan in place.

The politics notwithstanding, we believe that having good policy in place is important. That includes Fort Erie. It includes the opportunity for Fort Erie to work with the Ontario Racing Commission and put in place a plan that will make it sustainable into the future.

What our plan does is link the future of horse racing to a renewed focus on the customers, not total dependence on the slots. I've said, at the same time, that integrating horse racing with gaming across the province is the way to sustainability.

That's what we're doing. Politics notwithstanding, Fort Erie can work with the Ontario Racing Commission, and my hope is that they will have a future.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. John Fraser: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier in her role as the Minister of Agriculture and Food: I know that in the past Open for Business has been a forum for food businesses to discuss such regulations as meat regulations with government. Across Ottawa and eastern Ontario, we have businesses that have been affected by the government's rules around meat handling, and I know that this issue is important to the sector.

I understand that it has been brought to the table for discussion at previous Open for Business meetings and that you had another meeting just last week. Can the minister update the House on the progress made on this issue at your most recent Open for Business meeting?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to thank the member from Ottawa South for his question. I was really pleased at last week's Open for Business meeting to be able to hear from the sector how positive they are about the changes that are being made, particularly to the meat inspection regulations. The changes we've made will create a more flexible and outcome-based approach to compliance. They'll clarify regulatory requirements and promote competitiveness and innovation for the industry, without compromising food safety or cutting regulation arbitrarily.

That's really important, that people understand that this isn't just about making a political decision to cut regulation. This is about looking at what is really going to work to allow the industry to function and to keep food safety in place. These changes come into effect on January 1.

Another area we've discussed at the table is regulations for biodigesters. This has come up. We are going to work to make changes to improve the economics of operating anaerobic digestive systems. Those are the kinds of partnerships that we want to support going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: It's great to hear that progress is being made by working together with the agri-food sector.

As a follow-up to the Minister of Agriculture and Food: My constituents consistently tell me that access to locally produced and processed food is a priority for them. In fact, like many urban MPPs, many of the Ottawa caucus's constituents work in the agri-food sector, like in the food processing, retail and wholesale sectors, and I know it is important for them that the industry continues to grow and thrive.

Could the minister please tell this House: How does the Open for Business forum benefit the agri-food sector?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to just say that recently I challenged the agri-food industry to double its growth rate and to create more than 120,000 new jobs by

2020. The only way that can happen is if government and the industry work in partnership.

If I go back to the previous question, about the comments I was making on anaerobic digesters, for example, the kinds of regulations that increase approval time and costs are the kinds of things we need to look at, because if the industry is going to be able to expand, we need to make sure that we are being as efficient as possible while, as I say, keeping food safety processes in place.

That's the kind of partnership that the Open for Business table has created. We are making progress; people were very positive. We've brought together the whole sector, food processors and producers, which means that we're getting all sides of the story as we make these decisions. It's a very good process, and I want to continue to work in partnership with the industry.

ELGIN-MIDDLESEX DETENTION CENTRE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, on Friday morning the correctional officers at the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre found an inmate dead in the showers. The 29-year-old from Sarnia was beaten beyond recognition. He was only there to serve 163 days for a non-violent crime. The latest death is one more indication of the problems at EMDC. These problems are systemic and I've been warning you to take action for two years now. Minister, in light of this recent death, what are you doing to ensure the safety of inmates, correctional officers and other front-line workers at EMDC?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, I want to send my condolences to the family and friends of the individual. The incident of course is under investigation by the police, the coroner's office and also my ministry.

The health and safety of the inmates in our correctional facilities is my number one priority. That's why we introduced a 12-point plan last year to address the concerns at EMDC. I'm committed to continue to work with the management and the union at EMDC to improve the situation.

Let me tell you of the substantive progress we have made since. We have installed 350 security cameras, we have a new control model, we have six metal detectors and we have an X-ray machine for baggage. In the supplementary, I will continue to tell you what we have done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Minister, if your solutions had worked, that inmate would still be alive today. You should also include in your number one priority the correctional officers and also the front-line workers working at that jail.

Minister, since you've taken over this file, you've let the conditions at EMDC get progressively worse. Your inaction threatens the safety of correctional officers, inmates and front-line workers. I know the ministers across the floor enjoy the part of their job where they get to be

nice and have great photo ops. However, the true test of leadership, Minister, is how you deal with and manage problems.

The problems at EMDC are systemic and I have drawn attention to them time and time again in this chamber. Following the last inquest, into a death that occurred in 2009, the ministry didn't act until I was elected and put pressure on you to do so. It makes me think your ministry does not act unless I tell you to do so. Minister, do I constantly have to hold your hand in order for you to do your job?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: What we have done also: We have hired 11 additional full-time correctional officers, we have three new sergeants, we have one additional mental health nurse and we now have 24-hour nursing.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to take advice from that party that made a mess of the correctional services when they were in power. They closed jails like you wouldn't believe. We have now no room for programs, and rehabilitation was not their number one priority. We know that their cousins at the federal level are the same: "We put more people in jail longer. We leave them there longer and no rehabilitation." It's not what we're going to do. I'm going to transform that sector of my responsibility. Thank you very much.

ELGIN-MIDDLESEX DETENTION CENTRE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is also to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. I'm going to try this again: Adam Harvey Kargus is the fourth inmate to die in four years at Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre, a facility that has been plagued with design flaws, overcrowding and understaffing. Can the minister assure us that there were enough correctional officers on duty the night of this tragic fatality?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, as I said, the safety of our inmates and our correctional officers is my number one priority. I've been working with management and with the union to make sure that we will improve this situation. The day of the incident, the EMDC capacity was 410, and there were 389 inmates in the facility.

As I said, our responsibilities are safety and security. I'm going to repeat what we have done: We have hired more staff. We now have 24-hour nursing there and we have one mental health nurse who was not there before. We have 11 additional full-time correctional officers.

I'll continue to work with both the union and management to make sure that we have a safe correctional facility in London-Middlesex.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It has been months since we've been raising these issues, and the situation really has yet to improve. Inquests have called for increased staffing

levels, yet the ministry has done nothing. The ministry committed to set up an EMDC advisory board last year, and we're still waiting for that to happen. The upgrades that have been made to EMDC do not take into account the structural layout of the facility and the need for more direct supervision of inmates. What will it take for the ministry to do its duty and improve the standards at EMDC?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm going to repeat again: We now have 350 security cameras that were installed. We have a new control module. We have six metal detectors. We have a baggage X-ray machine. We have more correctional officers. We will continue to improve the situation in the Elgin-Middlesex correctional facility, and this will be done.

Despite the best efforts, violence is a reality for correctional facilities everywhere, but with all of these improvements we hope that the situation will continue to improve.

DEFERRED VOTES

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À SOUTENIR LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act / Projet de loi 105, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'impôt-santé des employeurs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1142 to 1147.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On October 2, 2013, Mr. Leal moved second reading of Bill 105.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Hatfield, Percy	Munro, Julia
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Holyday, Douglas C.	Murray, Glen R.
Arnott, Ted	Horwath, Andrea	Naqvi, Yasir
Bailey, Robert	Hoskins, Eric	Natyshak, Taras
Barrett, Toby	Hunter, Miltzie	Nicholls, Rick
Bartolucci, Rick	Jackson, Rod	O'Toole, John
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Oraziotti, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jeffrey, Linda	Piruzza, Teresa
Chan, Michael	Jones, Sylvia	Prue, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob	Klees, Frank	Sandals, Liz
Chudleigh, Ted	Kwinter, Monte	Sattler, Peggy
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Schein, Jonah
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Scott, Laurie
Crack, Grant	MacLaren, Jack	Sergio, Mario
Damerla, Dipika	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Singh, Jagmeet
Dhillon, Vic	Mantha, Michael	Smith, Todd
Duguid, Brad	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Dunlop, Christfield	Matthews, Deborah	Taylor, Monique
Elliott, Christine	McDonnell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	McMeekin, Ted	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill

Forster, Cindy
Fraser, John
Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael

McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Milligan, Rob E.
Milloy, John
Morioli, Reza

Wilson, Jim
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Yakubuski, John
Yurek, Jeff
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 86; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So ordered.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham on a point of order.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to introduce two guests to the members of the Legislature: David Smith and Bob Simpson. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo on a point of order.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome my good friend Kim Beggs to the House today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands adjourned until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1151 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd like to introduce members of the Ontario Lung Association, who are joining us in the gallery today: Andrea Stevens Lavigne, Peter Glazier, Sherry Zarins, Lindsey Robins, Kait Wallace, Alexandra Jackson and John Chenery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd also like to recognize members of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, specifically from the Durham branch: Wanda Secord and Lisa Sarsfield. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The month of November marks lung health month.

The Ontario Lung Association is a leader in the prevention and control of chronic lung disease and asthma,

and promotes tobacco cessation and prevention, as well as air quality and its overall effect on lung health. The association also works to educate and support people with lung disease in Ontario.

Through generous donations, the Ontario Lung Association has been able to invest over \$27 million into lung health research.

It's estimated that 2.4 million Ontarians currently live with a serious lung disease, and studies show that that number will rise to 3.6 million people in the next 30 years.

The association has put forward a series of initiatives that create a comprehensive Ontario lung health action plan. The ideas include:

—issues around smoking cessation;

—a comprehensive primary care model which will involve managing asthma and COPD with care and education;

—accurate diagnosis through spirometry for early screening for COPD; and

—pulmonary rehabilitation, improving quality of life after a COPD diagnosis.

The Lung Association has asked the government for \$112 million to write a lung health action plan as well as \$21 million to implement their plan.

These are all very sensible solutions, Mr. Speaker. I would urge the government to work to enact such a plan, which is going to help prevent lung disease, improve patient outcomes and make effective use of our health care dollars.

Thank you to the members of the association for being here today.

CITY OF TORONTO

Mr. Jonah Schein: Over recent days, I've heard from many constituents in Davenport about their profound disappointment and frustration with the news coming from Toronto city hall. Recent events at city hall threaten to divide our city. They distract us from the real challenges that we face. They obscure the values that we share in common and our potential to face these challenges when we work together.

We're lucky, in Davenport, to have real city builders like Alejandra Bravo and Dave Meslin, who are dedicated to deepening civic engagement in our community and across the city. For years, these two have worked to support Torontonians from diverse backgrounds to get involved in politics, to vote, to work on campaigns, to run for political office and to meet the challenge of building a great city.

Recently, Alejandra has championed the I Vote Toronto campaign to give permanent residents the vote in municipal elections. This campaign enfranchises newcomers to Canada and encourages them to get involved in our local communities and to have a say in our city. This reform would increase voter participation and strengthen our democracy.

Dave continues to champion the ranked-ballot initiative. It's a campaign for Toronto that would allow our city to use a ranked ballot for municipal elections. Dave argues that a ranked ballot would discourage negative campaigning, would encourage more candidates to come forward and get involved, would provide more choices for voters and ensure majority support for elected councillors and mayors.

Both of these initiatives speak to more positive and inclusive politics that encourages more people to get involved in building our city together.

I want to celebrate these two residents of Davenport and thank them for their leadership.

I encourage everyone in Toronto to keep the faith, to support these important campaigns and recommit to making this a better city.

DIWALI

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: This past weekend, I had the opportunity to attend many Diwali celebrations; in particular, two with our Premier, the Honourable Kathleen Wynne, hosted by the Canadian Museum of Hindu Civilization and by the Malton gurdwara, and in my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South, at the Dixie gurdwara and the Ram Mandir.

Diwali, the festival of lights, is a time to express our gratitude for what we have achieved in the past year and to rekindle the spirit of hope—hope for a better and brighter future.

Diwali is celebrated all over the world by different communities for different reasons. Diwali personifies friendship, future prosperity and hope.

Mr. Speaker, Diwali is also a reminder of how fortunate we are with so much diversity in our province. It not only enriches us socially, culturally and economically; it also connects us globally. Diversity, indeed, is a source of great strength and pride, in which our government firmly believes.

HAYTER GROUP

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's a pleasure to rise today to recognize the Hayter Group on recently being awarded the Better Business Bureau of Western Ontario's Integrity Award. For 16 years, these awards have recognized businesses throughout southwestern Ontario that have received significant praise by customers, employees and within the community.

Founded in Alvinston in 1952, and now with branches in Chatham and Cambridge, the Hayter Group is a family business that has offered reliable plumbing, heating, geothermal and solar panel service to rural markets in our communities. The Hayter Group was one of the first geothermal installers in Ontario and has now installed over 1,500 kilometres of geothermal piping across our region.

I would like to offer congratulations to the Hayter Group for their great service to our community and on

being awarded the Integrity Award from the Better Business Bureau of Western Ontario. Thank you to them for all they do in giving back to our communities, and, once again, congratulations.

ANNIVERSARY OF SIKH MASSACRE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I rise to extend my sympathies on the 29th anniversary of the November 1984 Sikh genocide that targeted Sikh men, women and children across India—and many other parts of the capital city and the region.

What makes the November 1984 Sikh genocide so fundamentally heinous was that, under the guise of a communal Hindu-Sikh conflict, it was actually democratically elected officials from the Congress Party of India who facilitated these attacks.

These attempts to create disharmony are simply unacceptable. That is why we must remember and thank members of the Hindu, Muslim, Christian and other communities who, at grave risk to themselves, provided protection and refuge to their Sikh brothers and sisters.

The former Chief Justice of the Indian Supreme Court and author of the Nanavati Commission report stated that the killings of Sikhs were planned and organized. Human rights organizations have also reported that voter lists were used to identify and target Sikh businesses and homes, and that children were found beheaded in the aftermath of those horrendous days.

As we reflect on and remember these atrocities, let us categorically denounce a world where democratic tools are so severely undermined that voter lists become tools for genocide.

On the path to reconciliation, we must continue to pursue truth and justice. And we must prioritize the victims as they heal from these traumatic events. These are the obligations of a democratic state—to stand for the universal human rights of all people. Lest we forget.

CHILDREN AT RISK

Mr. Phil McNeely: October was Autism Awareness Month. I'm pleased to rise again in recognition of the Ottawa organization Children at Risk and their efforts to raise funds and awareness for autistic children.

The October 26 weekend marked another successful Annual Celebrity Carved Pumpkin Auction fundraiser. Each year, over 100 pumpkins are transformed into jack-o'-lanterns and are presented throughout the city of Ottawa at local malls. For this contest, various news, radio, TV, athletic, business and political personalities participate in crafting a pumpkin and donating a prize to be bid on.

To date, the event has raised over \$93,000. This year's total was an impressive \$11,270.

I was pleased to participate with my own submission, made by my crafty assistant, Nathalie Montpetit. I want to also congratulate other MPPs who took part in the "carving for the cause": the Honourable Yasir Naqvi, the

Honourable Bob Chiarelli and Nepean–Carleton MPP Lisa MacLeod.

All proceeds go to community-based projects such as summer camps, family support groups, information seminars and educational workshops.

Without organizations like Children at Risk, many autistic children would not receive the special care they need to reach their full potential. For 34 years, Children at Risk has been helping autistic children and their families in the Ottawa region, and I applaud their ongoing work.

Congratulations to president Paul Lacroix and his team for another successfully run carved pumpkin contest.

1310

MURRAY CARDIFF

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Today, I'd like to follow up on the announcement I shared with the assembly on Thursday afternoon regarding the passing of Murray Cardiff, a farmer, a gentleman, a guy who was proud to call Brussels in the riding of Huron–Bruce home, as well as a respected former federal member of the PC Party of Canada.

Mr. Cardiff was a family friend and a mentor, and I'm honoured to stand here on behalf of the PC Party to honour his memory today.

Murray Cardiff passed away on Thursday, October 31 at Listowel Memorial Hospital in his 80th year.

Murray was born on June 10, 1934, on his family farm in Grey township. Mr. Cardiff was a farmer by chosen career and, as such, he understood the concerns of his Huron–Bruce constituents very well.

Murray was the beloved husband of Betty for 55 years, and he was the loving father of Jeff and Cathy, Joan, Scott and Kendra and the proud grandpa of Emily, Matthew, Blake and Tanner.

Murray Cardiff was first elected to the House of Commons in 1980, and he served his riding so amazingly well from 1980 to 1993. He was a tireless advocate for Ontario's agri-food sector.

On behalf of the PC Party, I want to offer my sincere condolences. We will miss Murray, his sage advice, his keen sense of conservative fiscal responsibility and his ability to rally the troops. I take comfort in believing, and I hope his family does as well, that Murray has been warmly welcomed by his colleagues and members of the affiliated Huron–Bruce provincial riding association, which can be found beyond the sunset. All is well.

RENÉ LALONDE

M. John Fraser: C'est un honneur et un privilège d'avoir la chance de prendre la parole aujourd'hui et de dire quelques mots au sujet de mon très bon ami, René Lalonde.

René Lalonde was born in Curran, Ontario, on September 11, 1923, and was one of 14 children. In February 1943, he enlisted in the army and became a tank

driver. On Friday, October 13, 1944, while serving in Rimini, Italy, he stepped on a mine and lost his leg.

René and his wife, Marianne, were married in 1951 and had three children: Micheline, Louis Philippe and Isabelle. René and Marianne celebrate their 62nd anniversary this year. René has been a businessman, a high school teacher and a school board trustee. As a member of the Royal Canadian Legion, he also played an important role in the naming of Highway 416 as Veterans Memorial Highway.

Most importantly, René has been a very good friend to many. I met René on a campaign almost 25 years ago, and he has taught me many things. I have never heard him utter an unkind word or complain about anything. He is the embodiment of the meaning of hard work and fortitude.

René, I would like to thank you for everything you have done for your friends and family, for our cause and for your service to Canada. René, j'aimerais te remercier pour tout ce que tu as fait pour ta famille et tes amis, pour notre cause, et pour ton service pour le Canada.

SNOWCREST RIDERS SNOWMOBILE CLUB

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to recognize the accomplishments of a truly remarkable organization in my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka. Based in Gravenhurst, the Snowcrest Riders Snowmobile Club has made 2013 a year to remember by being the recipient of three major awards, including the Canadian Council of Snowmobile Organizations' club of the year, the International Snowmobile Club of the Year and being inducted into the International Snowmobile Hall of Fame. Last year, in 2012, they were the OFSC club of the year.

Recently, I was able to attend an event to recognize their awards with Bob Clarke, the current president of the Snowcrest Riders.

This organization has been particularly proactive in increasing snowmobile opportunities in the Muskoka area, with their efforts leading to completed projects such as snowmobile bridges over Highway 11 and Beaver Creek.

They also support the non-profit Prostate Extreme Team, whose efforts help to raise funds and awareness on prostate-related ailments. I look forward to attending their event at the Marriot Residence Inn, which will take place over this winter's Family Day long weekend, at Muskoka Bay in Gravenhurst.

I would also like to recognize and thank the countless volunteers, landowners and sponsors who provide the community support that has all helped make the Snowcrest Riders Snowmobile Club so successful throughout the years. I would also like to sincerely congratulate the riders, and wish them the best on what I'm sure will be another excellent winter riding season.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FISCAL TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY AMENDMENT ACT (PRE-ELECTION REPORTS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA TRANSPARENCE ET LA RESPONSABILITÉ FINANCIÈRES (RAPPORTS PRÉÉLECTORAUX)

Ms. Scott moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 126, An Act to amend the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, 2004 / Projet de loi 126, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2004 sur la transparence et la responsabilité financières.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Currently, the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, 2004, requires the Minister of Finance to release a pre-election report about Ontario's finances in such circumstances and by such deadline as provided for in the regulations. Unfortunately, there is no regulation for the next fixed election date in 2015 and nothing to address an election if it happens prior to the fixed election date in 2015.

This bill brings into legislation or law that the Minister of Finance, in a year there is a fixed date for a general election, is required to release a pre-election report no later than 30 days after the minister moves the budget motion, and requires the Auditor General to promptly review and release a statement describing the results of the review.

A new subsection applies to a pre-election report that is released in connection with a non-fixed-date general election. It requires the Auditor General to promptly review the report and to release a statement describing the results of the review, either before the election, if possible, or within a reasonable time after the election.

HUMAN RIGHTS CODE AMENDMENT ACT (GENETIC CHARACTERISTICS), 2013 LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LE CODE DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE (CARACTÉRISTIQUES GÉNÉTIQUES)

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 127, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code with respect to genetic characteristics / Projet de loi 127, Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne en ce qui a trait aux caractéristiques génétiques.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Mike Colle: If passed, this bill would amend Ontario's Human Rights Code to include genetic characteristics as a prohibited ground of discrimination. Every person would have a right to equal treatment without discrimination because of genetic characteristics. This includes the right to equal treatment if a person refuses to undergo or disclose the results of a genetic test.

In essence, this bill would prevent employers and insurance companies from discriminating against Ontarians on the basis of genetic testing.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Ms. Laurie Scott: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario College of Trades introduced new membership fees on April 1, 2013, which hit hard-working tradespeople to the tune of about \$84 million a year;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government stop this job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately."

It's signed by many people within my riding.

1320

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LOCAL FOOD ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES ALIMENTS LOCAUX

Mr. McMeekin, on behalf of Ms. Wynne, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 and to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to provide for a tax credit to farmers for donating certain agricultural products that they have produced / Projet de loi 36, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur les aliments locaux et modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour prévoir un crédit d'impôt pour les agriculteurs qui font don de certains produits agricoles qu'ils ont produits.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 36—kind of in an unorthodox order. I want to start by thanking the many local food organizations, agriculture groups and individuals who worked to make this act better.

As you know, when the government first introduced this bill just over a year ago, I was disappointed, as were

many stakeholders. We were hoping for a real food act, one that would have an impact on Ontario's food system.

Just a few days after it was introduced, Dalton McGuinty prorogued the Legislature, and the Local Food Act died on the order paper.

During the leadership campaign, Premier Wynne promised a strengthened Local Food Act, but when it was reintroduced it was virtually the same bill. In fact, during hearings, Darcy Higgins, from Food Forward, reminded the committee of the Premier's commitment and said, "The language of the act, we believe, should improve to meet this commitment."

I want to recognize a member of this Legislature who made one of the biggest contributions to improving the Local Food Act: Bob Bailey, the member from Sarnia-Lambton. In 2012, he introduced a bill to create a tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural products to an Ontario food bank. Bob is here this afternoon to be part of the debate.

Every year, 25 million pounds of fresh food are plowed under in Ontario fields, often because it isn't chosen for sale because of appearance. The tax credit will assist farmers with the cost of harvesting and transporting that food to the local food bank.

The bill died on the order paper when the Legislature was prorogued, but in May 2013 the member from Sarnia-Lambton reintroduced it. I want to commend him for his commitment and for putting it forward as an amendment to the Local Food Act.

In our amendment, we expand the tax credit to include not just traditional food banks but registered charities that are providing food free of charge, such as school nutrition programs, homeless shelters and seniors' programs.

The PC caucus has worked hard to try to make the Local Food Act something that would actually benefit our local food system and our farmers. The PC caucus believes that we need a food act—in fact, we proposed an Ontario food act in our white paper—but we think it needs to be more than a bill with just a great name. That's why we held local food round tables in Woodstock, Stratford, Cobourg, London, Windsor, Kingston and Ottawa to talk about ways to strengthen this bill. We brought together local food groups, restaurants, farmers, economic development officers and food processors to talk about the opportunities and challenges. In all of the round tables, the number one issue that emerged was the need for more food education.

That's why we put forward an amendment that would require food education in the curriculum in every grade. Of course, I was disappointed that the government members on the committee chose to block that amendment.

In a letter to the Premier, the Ontario Home Economists Association wrote:

"Despite the Ontario Foodland banner promoting the abundant high-quality fresh fruits and vegetables produced in this province, the CCHS of 2007 revealed that Ontarians are in the bottom percentiles of fruit and vegetable consumption.

"The Ontario Ministry of Health published this sad fact by Ontario region, and in turn identified school nutrition programs as a strong determinant of a healthy diet."

Requiring food education in the curriculum in every grade would have been a concrete step to actually increase food literacy for students.

As a member of the association wrote, "How terribly disappointing that our government does not value mandatory food preparation and nutrition education in Ontario, despite increased rates of many nutrition-related health issues such as diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity and heart disease."

One of the other things we heard repeatedly during our round tables and hearings was the need to establish real targets. We put forward an amendment that would require targets to be set within 12 months and that they would be real targets, not just aspirational ones. While the government members voted our amendment down, at least a 12-month time frame has now been included in the bill.

I'm also very pleased to report that we saved Ontario Agriculture Week. Through a PC amendment, we created Local Food Week, beginning the first Monday in June. This will kick off the summer local food season and, because it is during the school year, it will support more food education. It will also ensure that we have a separate week to celebrate all the contributions of our farmers.

I also want to mention that at the request of a number of groups, we put forward an amendment that expanded the definition of local foods. As Ontario Nature said in their thank-you email, "The inclusion of forest and freshwater foods in the definition of local foods made the act much more representative of northern food sources."

As members of the opposition, we have done what we can to make this a real food act, but there are many problems facing our food system and our farmers that still need to be addressed. It's clear that this government does not have a clear plan for how to increase local food or strengthen agriculture and agri-food in Ontario.

Last year, we released a white paper that put forward a number of ideas that would strengthen the agriculture sectors, from our small market gardens to our larger producers. One of the challenges to increasing local food procurement is the need to aggregate supply. In our white paper, we recommend creating a second food terminal. It would be a regional food terminal and would increase access to local food, reduce our carbon footprint and create jobs.

We also outlined the need to cut red tape. Farmers are currently spending the equivalent of almost four 40-hour workweeks just dealing with government red tape. The government likes to boast about their red tape program, but in our survey over 77% of farmers said that red tape is actually increasing.

As we consulted on the Local Food Act, we heard about the red tape problems in letters, round tables and at the hearings. In fact, a study of the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation released just a few weeks ago found that red tape is still a major barrier to farmers trying to grow

their farms. It cited too many layers of regulations and inconsistencies in how regulations were interpreted. In our white paper, we proposed cutting regulations by one third.

We also pointed out the need to address the spiralling cost of hydro. In our survey, 97% of farmers said they had been impacted by increasing hydro rates, and over 60% of farmers said that the increase had been significant.

On Friday, the Bruce County Federation of Agriculture president tweeted: "The cost to produce food on Ont farms went up \$32mil today thanks to the increase on our hydro bills."

In the report released by the association of Ontario food processors, they have identified "steep increases in utility costs" as one of the challenges they are facing.

We can't have local food without our farmers, but this government's policies are making it more and more difficult for them to operate.

In my question this morning, I asked the Premier why she would put money into salaries and benefits instead of investing into the insurance programs that our farmers need.

Ontario agriculture needs real leadership. The Premier has now been the Minister of Agriculture and Food for about eight months. There are those who would argue that this is an opportunity for our agriculture industry, but, like the Local Food Act, it is one that can easily be missed.

So far, the Premier has not created a legacy. She has not taken bold action to improve the agriculture industry or the agri-food sector. The fact that the Local Food Act is stronger than the one she introduced is not her legacy; it's the legacy and the hard work of people like Bob Bailey, Darcy Higgins from Food Forward and Carolyn Young of Sustain Ontario. It was through the hard work of the Canadian Environmental Law Association, the Ontario Home Economics Association, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, Ontario Nature and many other organizations. It was through the hard work of those people who took the time to meet with us at the round tables, or call or email with their suggestions. I want to thank them all for making this act better and for the work they've done to strengthen Ontario's food system.

1330

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am very, very pleased to be able to speak to third reading of Bill 36, the Local Food Act. I will just say, in response to my critic: Thank you very much for your comments. I want to say thank you very much to the member for Sarnia-Lambton as well, that he was able to work with us. As the member opposite, the member for Oxford, said, we have been able to improve the Local Food Act by listening to all of the people who gave us feedback.

That's how I believe the Legislature is meant to work: When a government brings in a bill and is then able to

work with opposition and work with all of those folks in the field, so to speak, who understand the issues, we are then able to improve legislation. I think it is precisely that kind of collaboration that is the legacy of this particular process.

I'm pleased to speak to third reading of the Local Food Act. This legislation will help us celebrate and promote all of the good things that are grown, harvested and made right here in Ontario. That is extremely important.

In fact, it's one of the first things that I heard when I was first elected to this Legislature. My colleague John Wilkinson, who was the member for Perth-Wellington, and I started a process called "Ag 101." We would bring urban MPPs to farms on a regular basis each year. We would have a full day where urban MPPs would go into rural communities, into the agricultural community—and vice versa; we did the reverse as well. We brought farmers and folks from rural communities into the city as well.

One of the first things that I heard on that first trip, which must have been in 2004, was farmers saying to me and saying to us that they wanted the government to promote what they grew. They wanted the government to promote local food and the consumption of local food and food that was processed here. So we have been doing that, and this Local Food Act really accelerates and enhances that process.

When we choose local food, we keep the agri-food industry—which is one of the province's largest economic engines—running strong. That's really what this is about; it's about healthy eating and it's about great food, but it's also about our economy. We feed local economies, we support great jobs and we help our communities to grow and thrive. There's a virtuous circle there.

If passed, this bill will also complement our broader local food strategy—not everything in our strategy is in the bill itself—and that will, all together, encourage market growth and development for Ontario foods. That strategy includes up to \$30 million in investment over the next three years towards supporting innovative local food projects—projects like the ones that FoodShare Toronto runs, for example, which gets sustainable, healthy local food from the farm to the fork and, quite frankly, into our schools as well.

Over the last few years, we've worked with them to get more local food into student nutrition programs here in Toronto. I know that anyone who has spent time in schools understands how important it is that we have those nutrition programs for students, because if kids don't have enough to eat, it's very hard for them to learn and to study. Working with FoodShare Toronto and organizations like it across the province—we want to have more of those programs. I want to see more initiatives like that one in every part of Ontario.

That's what our strategy is really all about: It's about supporting projects that market and promote local food, to get even more of the good things that grow in Ontario on people's plates—and the good things that are made in

Ontario, because the food processing aspect of this is extremely important.

I want to help our partners to strengthen the local food networks by sharing ideas and being able to learn from each other's success, because there are good things happening in pockets in the province, and we want to connect those and make sure that everyone knows what the possibilities are.

Today, we have the opportunity, I believe, to move the yardstick farther. If the bill is passed, Ontario will be the first province in Canada to have such legislation in place. We have the opportunity, in this Legislature, to make history. By increasing awareness of food grown, made and harvested in Ontario, the Local Food Act will increase sales of Ontario food, and that is our objective.

This legislation will also allow us to set local food goals and targets in partnership with stakeholders. One of the concerns that we heard when this act was first introduced was that there was a concern about the prescriptive nature of the setting of targets. What we have said is, let's work with our partners to make sure that the targets that are set are realistic. We want that creative tension, we want to be able to push each other, but we don't want to be so prescriptive that it becomes burdensome for our partners—municipalities, for example. But I do believe that we need to, as I say, push each other to do the best that we can do.

It would also enable us to work with public sector organizations towards those goals, the setting of targets, and then to share information on their progress and results. I'm a great believer in shining a light on a subject, shining a light on an issue, beginning to measure something, and that by virtue of doing that, we see improvement. I think that's a very important part of this legislation.

The act also includes a requirement for government to produce a local food report on the activities it has undertaken to support this initiative. So we're forcing ourselves to practise what we preach and make sure that as we talk about local food, we are actually taking those actions within government to make sure that we're increasing our consumption and our procurement of local foods.

The feedback that we've received on the bill from the public, from agri-food stakeholders, and from all three parties has been invaluable, as I've said, and I want to again commend everyone who has engaged with us. Thank you very much for doing that, because, as I say, that's the way we strengthen legislation. We welcomed your comments because we want to ensure that this legislation is the best it can possibly be for the people of Ontario.

From that collaborative process, we have proposed a number of amendments to the bill. One of these amendments would require the minister to set goals and targets in several critical areas identified by stakeholders as being key to supporting and strengthening local food. These include improving people's understanding of local food, encouraging increased use of local food by public

sector organizations and increasing access to local food within one year after the requirement to do so has come into force.

We've also supported changes proposed by our opposition colleagues to strengthen the bill. This is where the member for Sarnia-Lambton has put forward an idea. He and I talked about it in Sarnia months ago, and I said that I thought that it was something that we should look at. We have done that. In fact, through an amendment to the Taxation Act, the bill would now provide a non-refundable 25% tax credit for farmers who donate their agricultural products to eligible community food programs such as food banks and soup kitchens.

We amended the definition of local—

Applause.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's a very good thing; that's right. Oui, c'est très bien.

We amended the definition of local food to include food produced or harvested anywhere in Ontario, including forest or freshwater food, and we would celebrate Local Food Week beginning the first Monday in June of each year. The minister would also be required to prepare an annual local food report.

So each of these amendments has been put in place to strengthen the bill and to help recognize and support the tremendous work of Ontario farmers, food processors, retailers and restaurant and foodservice operators.

I've always believed in the enormous potential of our agri-food sector—je crois que nous avons un bon avenir—and that's why I took on the role of Minister of Agriculture and Food earlier this year. I've travelled across the province to meet with farmers, with producers, with food processors and retailers to better understand the challenges and the opportunities ahead.

Last July, I had the chance to visit the Ontario Food Terminal in Etobicoke. It is an amazing place. It's the largest wholesale fruit and produce distribution centre in Canada and the third-largest in all of North America, after centres in Los Angeles and Chicago. It distributes products to every corner of Ontario and along our trade corridors that connect us to neighbouring provinces and into the United States.

1340

The hard work of the people who bring their produce into the food terminal is quite remarkable. There are people driving along the highway to get into the food terminal, leaving at 2 or 3 in the morning in order to get to the food terminal; throughout the season, it's a very, very demanding lifestyle.

So it's important that we recognize that it's not just the growing of the food; it's also the transporting it, the getting it to market, that's so important.

That terminal is a critical asset for our agri-food sector and the economy, and it really helped me to appreciate how important it is to have those strong connections between regions and industries in the province.

I've been reminded of this many times since I became minister, meeting with people about local food in communities across the province—in Bradford, Elmira, New

Dundee, Halton and Ottawa—or at community gardens, like the one Megan O’Neil, founder of the One Tomato Project, grew in Sarnia. I really want to know how my tomato plant is going, I say to the member. I need an update on that, how my tomato plant did, because I got to plant one. It was great to see so many children excited about planting in the garden.

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I heard it was doing very well, I say to the member for Huron–Bruce, so I am looking forward to that.

It was great to see kids so engaged in planting the garden. I know that all of the members in the House who have community gardens where schools are involved, with community, in planting—it’s a wonderful way for kids to learn about where their food comes from.

I had the opportunity of opening the Royal Winter Fair just last week. One of the displays that is at the Royal Winter Fair is designed to help young kids understand that food doesn’t just come from the grocery store, that there’s a time before that, that it comes from the farm. When kids grow up in an urban centre, they don’t necessarily have that information.

I have the greatest of respect for the young kids who are growing up on farms, the kids who are involved in the 4-H club—they have a deep understanding of responsibility, not just to the land but to animals and their responsibility in all of that. I think that where young kids are involved and engaged in planting and understanding where food comes from, particularly local food, it’s a terrific thing. I think that, as an education system and as a government, we can learn from some of those programs that have already been in place for many years in the agricultural community.

It’s really inspiring to see communities working toward that goal of enhancing local food, making sure that it’s available to everyone and showcasing their local food. After meeting with so many hard-working farmers, food processors and retailers, I think differently about the food that we produce and process across the province. As much as possible, I want to ensure that the food on our table was harvested or produced in Ontario.

We all come from different backgrounds. Some of us live in cities; others outside of cities, in our suburbs and in our rural communities. Even across the agri-food value chain, we have many different players, from the farmer all the way to the grocer. Supporting local food supports every single one of us along that chain. It’s part of our economic plan to invest in people, invest in infrastructure and create that dynamic business environment that will allow businesses to thrive and continue to succeed.

It’s why I have challenged the agri-food sector to increase its output and create 120,000 more jobs by 2020, because I believe that they can. I believe that, working together, we can do that, and we can grow this sector. It’s already a \$34-billion contributor to the GDP, but I believe that there’s more that we can do. There’s so much potential.

Local food is good for families, it’s good for communities and it’s good for the economy. I believe that we all have a role to play in supporting that success. I encourage the people of Ontario to choose local food, and I’m going to continue to support our farmers, our food processors and other agri-food businesses in the hard work that they do each day to get that fresh and delicious food on our plates.

As I said, this is about the industry. It’s about the farmers and the food processors, but, quite frankly, it’s about all of us, as a province, making sure that we do the very best we can in terms of that healthy food but also in terms of the economic growth that is possible. We have great potential in Ontario, and I want to thank everyone for working with us on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It’s a privilege and an honour to speak here today in support of Bill 36, also known as An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 and to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to provide for a tax credit to farmers for donating certain agricultural products that they have produced.

I will focus my comments on one particular area of the bill, Mr. Speaker. Last week, thanks to the work of the Standing Committee on Social Policy, Bill 36 was amended to include an initiative that’s very important to me and the people of Sarnia–Lambton. That initiative was first outlined in this Legislature on May 19, 2010, when I introduced the Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers, 2010, also known as the Fighting Hunger with Local Food Act. That bill, like the amendment to the Local Food Act that was adopted last week, created a non-refundable tax credit worth 25% of the current market value of agricultural products donated by farmers to food banks and soup kitchens.

This idea to try to increase donations to food banks was born after I volunteered to serve hot meals at the Inn of the Good Shepherd in Sarnia. Myles Vanni, who is the director of the Good Shepherd’s Lodge, invited me down, and I saw with my own eyes the need in my community for food banks, soup kitchens and the like. Myles was a real inspiration to me, and as we talked about what we could do, the idea of a tax credit for farmers came up.

That’s why, back in 2010 and during the two subsequent sessions of Parliament, I introduced and reintroduced the Fighting Hunger with Local Food Act. In each instance, the bill and its main intent—increasing donations to food banks through a tax credit to farmers who donate unused agricultural products—received support at all times from all parties in the House.

The Fighting Hunger with Local Food Act was even highlighted in the 2012 Environmental Commissioner’s report, as an idea to address the glaring need for food for the hungry in Ontario and the horrendous waste of food in our modern society and its disposal in landfills.

Unfortunately, the previous two attempts to move this initiative through the legislative process were cut short; one because of an election in 2011 and the other when

Queen's Park was prorogued by former Premier McGuinty.

However, on Tuesday, with the support of the members of this House, we will finally have an opportunity to cast a final vote in favour of the initiative originally laid out by the Fighting Hunger with Local Food Act, now adopted as an amendment to the Local Food Act, 2013.

The PC amendment to the Local Food Act creates a simple change to the tax system that will go a long way to relieve hunger and eliminate waste in our province. Inspired by similar programs in 10 US states, the Local Food Act will now create a non-refundable tax credit for farmers—worth 25% of the current market value of the donated agricultural product—who donate to a community food program or a food bank. In order to be eligible, the program must be run by a registered charity and must provide that food to the community free of charge. While it will not solve the entire problem of hunger in our province, Mr. Speaker, I think it's a common-sense solution to a clear need in my community and many other communities across Ontario.

The Ontario Association of Food Banks reports that food bank usage in Ontario increased by 10% between 2008 and 2012.

Last year alone, more than 413,000 people in Ontario, and in that number, 160,000 of them children, turned to food banks each month. This is an all-time high for the province, and it is straining these food banks and these volunteer organizations to their limit.

Even well-stocked food banks struggle to provide fresh, healthy food. In fact, the Ontario Association of Food Banks believes that over 70% of Ontarians who use food banks do not have access to the recommended servings of fruit and vegetables every week.

As we all know, proper nutrition is essential to our well-being, but more importantly, it is essential to the good health of these young people and children who are our responsibility at the end of the day.

Mr. Speaker, for many food banks, significant need occurs from June to August, but rarely do we ever think of our local food banks during the summer and autumn harvests. Ironically, while food banks struggle to provide for those in need, Ontario farmers must dispose of or plow back into their fields more than 25 million pounds of fresh, nutritious food every harvest. That's an amazing number, and I could hardly believe it when I first started researching this. So 25 million pounds of food which is perfectly good is surplus to their production quotas—or it could be what we would call seconds. The stores won't take it, but there's nothing wrong with it. People eat it. Why is this? In many instances, the food left behind is considered seconds. While perfectly healthy, tasty and fresh, the produce is not chosen for sale in the market because of cosmetic reasons, such as size, shape or colour.

1350

You may wonder, then: Why don't farmers just donate this food? Many do, but in many cases, farmers often cannot afford the cost to harvest, process and deliver

their unsold produce and foodstuffs to the local food banks despite a clear and overwhelming desire in the industry to do so. Simply put: We have the food; we just can't get it to those in need.

I might add that I talked to one farmer who produces tomatoes, and he said, "I can't even plow these surplus tomatoes back into the ground because they make my soil too acidic." He has to pay to harvest them to take them to be disposed of in a landfill. So this would certainly go a long way to help that individual.

This proposed tax credit will reduce the producers' tax burden, provide a strong incentive to make a donation and provide a high return on investment for the Ontario government. It will cost the province very little in lost revenue, forgoing approximately \$750,000 for an increase of over five million pounds of food. These figures suggest that this simple tax credit could provide a rate of return of almost \$7 for every \$1 that is donated.

I believe that this amendment presents a concrete solution which will not only assist local food banks and community food programs but also local farmers and struggling Ontarians. It will fight two problems: hunger and waste.

I encourage all members of this Legislature to support the Local Food Act in order to pass this important initiative and amendment into law. It is the right thing to do.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many people who have been involved in getting this important idea to this stage: thousands of people who signed petitions in support of the Local Food Act. Countless letters of support, newspaper columns, magazine articles and online posts have been written in favour of this important initiative to support Ontario's hunger. In addition, many stakeholders representing agricultural groups, food bank and community food programs as well as social agencies from across the province have come to Queen's Park to show their support. To all those people, I want to say thank you.

I'd also like to thank the PC critic for agriculture, Ernie Hardeman, and his executive assistant, Tara Barry, for their efforts to see this amendment to the Local Food Act through its final stages of development before being presented to committee last week.

I'd also like to say a special thank you to my staff, Anthony Rizzetto and David Donovan. Between the two of them, they were involved from start to finish with this initiative and key contributors to the effort to increase the availability of good, nutritious food for the people of Ontario.

I'd also like to think Bill Laidlaw of the Ontario Association of Food Banks and Myles Vanni of the Inn of the Good Shepherd in Sarnia. Mr. Laidlaw and his organization have always been available to support this initiative and provide answers for many of the technical questions that have come up over the years. Myles Vanni probably deserves the most credit. He invited me and my staff to help serve meals at the Inn of the Good Shepherd way back in 2010. He used that opportunity to present to

me the idea that would eventually become the Fighting Hunger with Local Food Act and then the PC amendment to the Local Food Act. Mr. Vanni goes above and beyond in his efforts to support those in need in Sarnia-Lambton.

By supporting the Local Food Act, 2013, the members of this House can do their part to support Mr. Vanni and the countless individuals across this province who have done similar work.

I'd also like to thank the Premier, in her role as the Minister of Agriculture, for considering this amendment. I think it makes her bill, Bill 36, that much better. At the end of the day, that's what we're all about: making this province a better place.

I look forward to the rest of the debate and tomorrow's final vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It truly is an honour, as a farmer, to be able to participate in the third reading debate of Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 and to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to provide for a tax credit to farmers for donating certain agricultural products that they have produced.

The title got a lot longer since we debated this last time, and that's a good thing—because I'd like to commend Mr. Bailey for all his work on this. It's a good addition to this bill. I'd like to spend a few minutes on that part and then revert back to the Local Food Act proper.

The one thing that's missing in the tax credit bill is a provision for processors. I think we could look at this further in the future. I know that processors can get tax credits already, but there is a place, specifically when you have—I'll give the example of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. Dairy Farmers have had this program for years—I believe the pork producers have the equivalent and there might be other programs like that, and they're good programs. Just briefly: The dairy farmer signs a contract to supply so much milk a month to the food banks, and the processor donates the processing. It's a partnership agreement. The same thing would work with other agricultural products.

I'm not trying to detract from the bill as it currently is; I very much support it. I'm not trying to detract from it. I'm just hoping that if we could put some more effort and some more thought into it and bring the processors into the fold, then it would have a much bigger impact on the food bank system. Food banks—kudos to them—are performing a job that we wish they wouldn't have to perform, but the need is out there, and they're fulfilling that need. But it would be much easier for them and for my local food banks at home, in Cobalt and Haileybury, to deal with processed food.

Tomatoes are a good example. If you have a lot of tomatoes at the end of the season—you can have a lot of tomatoes in Leamington, but there won't be a lot in Cobalt, and it's going to be impossible to get them from Leamington to Cobalt.

If, in the future, we could somehow try to include the processors, I think that would make a very good part of this bill that much better. But I would like to congratulate the member for having the tenacity to bring this forward and to get it through.

I'd like to go back. It's really a good thing that we were able to talk about food and all the aspects of it. I was talking about processing as it relates to food banks, but I think what we all learned—and we've had a lot of discussion about food in this House because of the Local Food Act—is that food isn't just about producing it and isn't just about eating it. It's getting it from the producer to the consumer. That's very important, and that's something we've learned here.

As we talk about local food, I'm going to diverge again for a minute. In the last month or so, there was an announcement federally that is actually going to hurt local food. As we talk about strengthening local food, we've had an announcement that, with the free trade agreement with the Europeans, one thing that's potentially going to be hit is cheese, and that will be local cheese. I can't name all the cheese factories in all the ridings, but I certainly can name the cheese factory in my riding. That's Thornloe. I'm very proud of it. They don't know yet—nobody knows yet—but it's different for the cheese manufacturer than it is for the dairy farmer. I'll just take a second, because it's really important to understand.

Dairy is a big part of local food. The way the dairy supply management system is set up, if there is an agreement signed or a breach of tariff barriers, every dairy farmer across the country takes the same hit. If the overall market goes down by 2% because of this CETA agreement—it's a little bit more complicated than this, but every dairy farmer will take a roughly 2% hit.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a lot of money.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's a lot of money, but it's not a death blow. That 2% is a big hit, but the way the system is designed, everyone shares the gains and everyone shares the losses. It's one of the great strengths of supply management.

But that doesn't extend to the cheese manufacturer. Under this agreement, the way it works, when an importer imports five tonnes of—my favourite example—Asiago, a great cheese, they don't put one extra block of Asiago on every cheese counter across the country. They pick a market where they think they can sell it, and in it goes. If that happens to be Thornloe's market, it will be a huge hit for them, and no one is going to put up their hand and say, "We'll take 2%."

Interjection.

1400

Mr. John Vanthof: And Thornloe makes great cheese. But that's something we have to understand: that the cheese makers are going to take a much bigger hit. Dairy farmers are taking a big hit, but they're all taking an equal hit. There are things that we can do. I think, as a province, there are things that we can do to make it—I think the dairy farmers have taken a trade-off in fine cheese, but there are things that we can do to help them

to regain maybe not that market but another market. I think that's something we have to work together in this House to do. It is part of local food. It's not specifically part of this act, but I'm taking this chance to bring it forward.

We've all had a lot of time to debate this and talk about this. We all spent a bit of time talking about our local manufacturers and our local farm markets. I'll just read this:

Je voudrais profiter de cette occasion pour reconnaître quelques personnes qui prennent part à la nourriture locale.

Ce samedi soir passé, aux prix d'excellence en affaires de Nipissing Ouest, accueillis par la Chambre de commerce de Nipissing Ouest, Field Good Farms a gagné le Prix du jeune entrepreneur de l'année. Ryan Spence et Isabelle Legault cultivent les terres agricoles qui ont été dans la famille d'Isabelle pour cinq générations. Ils se concentrent à fournir la région de Nipissing Ouest avec des légumes frais, des oeufs et de la volaille par un système d'association de consommateurs et de fermiers.

Leisure Farms a été nommée pour le prix de l'économie verte. Leisure Farms est une affaire de famille qui se spécialise dans la culture de petits fruits frais, de citrouilles et de maïs doux. Ils accueillent des activités de famille chaque week-end pendant la période de croissance.

Mes félicitations, tant aux pionnières et pionniers de la nourriture locale qu'à la chambre de commerce, pour une soirée formidable.

My first French in the Legislature.

Applause.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, colleagues.

Now, I've got 10 minutes and I'd like to talk about the act. When it was first introduced—it has been introduced a few times. When it was first introduced it was very weak, we thought. It was introduced a few times more due to circumstances—I'm not going to go into the reasons why and why it wasn't. One of the only real action items in the act is creating Local Food Week. I believe that first Local Food Week was in May, then Local Food Week was on Agriculture Week and now, in this final draft, Local Food Week is in June. Hopefully the third try isn't a strike. The reason, for those who are farming out there, especially in my neck of the woods: June isn't the ideal week for Local Food Week, but it is a week that the kids are in school, and we can use that opportunity to focus on local food. I think that's one of the reasons why we decided as a group that June was probably the best week for it. Is it the first or second week of June?

Interjection: Second.

Mr. John Vanthof: The second week of June.

One amendment that's in the act, and it shows up a couple of times—it's a good thing that the word "may" has been changed to the word "shall." That's a huge difference. For me, in normal language, the difference between "may" and "shall" is the difference between "maybe" and "must." For the folks at home, that's a big,

big difference. That makes the act in itself quite a bit stronger. I'll flip through here and I'll read you a place:

"Goals and targets

"4(1) The minister shall, to further the purposes of the act, establish goals or targets...."

But then, there's a problem in this sentence. It's not a problem that's going to kill the act—nobody get worried; we're very much in support—but it is a problem. "The minister shall"—very strong words—"to further the purposes of the act, establish goals or targets to aspire to in the following areas..." Aspire—this is an aspirational piece of legislation. I'm trying to think of another aspirational piece of legislation, like—

Mr. Jonah Schein: A balanced budget.

Mr. John Vanthof: We put forward several amendments to try to make it a bit more quantitative, a bit less aspirational, but they weren't successful. While we're talking about the difference between aspirational and non-aspirational, I'd like to read some of the amendments we put forward that didn't make it, and I would like people at home and people in the Legislature to be the judge. Hopefully, now that these are in the record, we'll be able to look back, a year or two years from now, and see if the government has chosen that direction, because that's what we were worried about. We have an aspirational piece of legislation with no real direction. It's nice to do all the big words and all the talk, but there's no real direction.

Here's one that we moved to the same section:

"Goals and targets

"4(1) The minister shall, to further the purposes of this act, establish goals or targets to aspire to in respect of local food"—we left that word in, but we gave examples—"including goals or targets to":

"(a) improve food literacy in schools;

"(b) increase access to student nutrition programs across Ontario and increase their local food content;

"(c) increase local food content in school cafeterias;

"(d) increase experiential"—big words; I can read French better than I can read English—"learning opportunities for Ontario students by developing school garden programs and increasing the number and use of teaching kitchens in schools; and

"(e)"—very near and dear to me—"reduce or streamline regulatory requirements governing the production and processing of local foods with a view to encouraging increased availability of local food without significantly affecting food safety."

Now, this didn't pass, and the reason was that the government felt it was too prescriptive. But this wasn't the only thing they could look at. We were just trying to give them a direction to go, and these were based on the people who came to the committee hearings. We heard a wide view of people at the committee hearings.

Sadly, the committee hearings were restricted and the clause-by-clause was also restricted, because the Local Food Act was under a time allocation motion, so you could only talk about it for a certain length of time. In the committee hearing, that was a big problem, because

people on all sides saw benefit in each other's amendments. But because of the time allocation motion, there was an inability to make any—how would I describe it—on-the-spot adjustments? You dealt with what you had and that was it, and I think that was a fault of the time allocation motion. We could have made this bill better. We could have made it a lot better.

There are a lot of things in local food—and in food, period—that this bill doesn't touch. In this province, there are estimates that we lose 300 or more acres per day of agricultural land. Is the Local Food Act going to do anything about that? No, nothing. Ontario has, I believe, half of Canada's class-1 farmland, and we're losing it at a quick rate. Is there anything, even, in the Local Food Act to aspire to saving Ontario's farmland? No.

1410

So the food act itself—there's a direction where we could go to help local food. When I was talking to Ryan at the chamber of commerce dinner—I went up and shook his hand—we were talking about the Local Food Act, because this couple sells local food. They built their business on it. They're young and dynamic. He asked me about the Local Food Act, and I said, "Well, honestly, you're doing a good job now, and you've started this business. Honestly, the Local Food Act is not going to change your life, because the Local Food Act is kind of trying to get ahead of a parade that's already started."

The movement has started. The movement doesn't need to be pushed; the movement has started. It's kind of a case of people trying to take credit for what other people have already done. I think that's something we have to recognize.

I've heard the Premier, several times, saying that she's challenging the agriculture industry to create so many more jobs. Well, we've all come to realize the strength of the agri-food industry, because a lot of the other manufacturing faltered in this last economic recession. Agriculture has always kept going on—2% or 3% increases, always, kind of under the radar—and I think it has a lot of upswing.

There's a lot of room for increase in the agricultural sector, and they've got a lot of things that they can aspire to, but they're going to need a bit more help than the Local Food Act. If you really want to see the industry do what it can, and do more than it has—because it has done a lot; it has kept us fed, it has kept us happy and it has kept us in hundreds of thousands of jobs, really without us paying a lot of attention.

Hopefully when it's reviewed—because an amendment that we did put in that was accepted was that this has to be reviewed yearly, not once every three years—we can look and say, "Okay, what have you actually done?" One thing we mentioned was that, the way it was originally structured, you said the minister "may" set goals and targets and priorities and review them after three years. Well, what we have to do now is we have to set a starting point and review it annually. We are fully in favour of the Local Food Act, but it's just a start.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Grant Crack: It's a pleasure for me to speak today on the local food bill on third reading. I'd like to thank all the members who have spoken previously.

The local food bill will, if passed, provide a framework for more collaboration among government, stakeholders and the broader public sector to develop common goals that we can all work towards. It would also allow for better information-sharing on innovative and successful initiatives in the broader public sector.

Ontario is a place with so much potential, and our agri-food industry has many advantages that make it a leader. From farm to fork, the industry is diverse. We have impressive food and beverage processing and retail sectors. They are home to the best prime agricultural land in the country. We have an abundance of clean water, a good growing climate, solid infrastructure and a skilled workforce.

We also have an international reputation for quality and safety in our food. We have a diverse population that gives us insight into international markets and represents opportunities for new markets right here at home. We can tap into consumers' changing tastes, seizing opportunities in organic, food for health, ethnic foods, artisan and specialty goods. Our government is going to help the agri-food sector by supporting that dynamic and innovative business climate. We need to invest in innovation that will modernize this sector.

And sometimes we need to know when to just get out of the way. That's something that we will work through, through the Open for Business agri-food stakeholder forum. It's one of the ways that we invite industry leaders to bring forward concerns over regulatory barriers so that we can work together to find solutions.

Those solutions also support local food. An example of this is our recent amendment to the meat regulation under the Food Safety and Quality Act. We worked together with the Ontario Independent Meat Processors and meat plant licensees to develop a suite of technical amendments that provide for a more flexible and outcome-based approach to compliance. The amendment helped to clarify regulatory requirements and promote competitiveness and innovation for the industry without compromising food safety.

Open for Business has been effective, and, as a result, the Premier recently announced that we are all expanding its mandate beyond regulations to all aspects of economic growth in the sector.

Our government will continue to encourage investment and innovation, because we know that in a highly competitive world, investment and innovation are important. We need to be leaders. That is why we committed to investing up to \$30 million for local food projects over the next three years. It is why we made sure innovation was the central plank of the new Growing Forward 2 suite of programs, with \$235 million to support innovative initiatives over the next five years.

It's why we continue to recognize leading agri-food innovators through the Premier's agri-food innovation excellence awards. Just a few weeks ago, Premier Wynne—the Minister of Agriculture and Food as well—presented the top five agri-food innovation awards for the province at our Agri-Food Summit. The Premier's Award went to Monforte Dairy, a rapidly growing company from Stratford that produces artisanal cheeses. In 2008, production nearly ground to a halt when their rental location became unavailable. In order to build a new facility, they came up with a financing model that had never been implemented by an Ontario food processor. They sold shares of their company to customers, redeemable in cheese. That had a great economic impact on the business and on the community. Since reopening, they have doubled their staff to 20, purchased a variety of milk from 20 local farmers for their artisanal cheese and have seen over \$2 million in sales.

Monforte is passionate about local food, and plans to share their expertise by using their award to open a cheese-making school.

Len and Marisa Crispino are also passionate about creating local products. They received the Minister's Award for Innovation for their Foreign Affair Winery. The idea for the Foreign Affair Winery started in Italy, where Len fell in love with the appassimento wines, a northern specialty made by drying the grapes before pressing them. The challenge was to find a way to apply the appassimento technique right here in Ontario, despite the differences in soil, growing seasons and grape varieties. They did this by re-engineering the air flow on their 40-acre vineyard.

Today, Len and Marisa Crispino are great examples of how persistence and passion for their work can result in success. Their wines are served in more than 100 preferred restaurants in Ontario. They were recognized by Niagara University in New York State as the business leader of the year for their innovation and pioneering in wine production. At least six other Niagara wineries now produce wine using this method. The winery has invested in new technology and anticipates a 60% increase in production levels, from 5,000 to 8,000 cases this year.

1420

During the awards ceremony, we also recognized three leaders in innovation. Among them was Geissberger Farmhouse Cider Inc. in Hampton. Gord and Garry Geissberger came up with a cider press on wheels that travels right to the source: the apple orchard. It doesn't get any more local than that. Innovations like these show us that local food is more than just fresh produce; it means locally processed and value-added products too. Using computerized pressing equipment and a special packaging method, the customized trailer can now process 500 litres of cider per hour, creating a product that stays fresh for an entire year. That means fewer costs for producers and tastier cider for customers.

The second Leaders in Innovation Award went to Thompson's Maple Products in Hilton Beach. Doug Thompson knew that monitoring the tap lines for a maple

sugar bush of 20,000 trees was a challenge, so he teamed up with a computer programmer to develop a wireless remote monitoring system to report the status of each line to his computer and smart phone every few minutes. Today, the innovative system helps boost production and reduces costs.

The third Leaders in Innovation Award went to YU Ranch in Tillsonburg. YU Ranch delivers its grass-fed beef to hungry customers using the first hybrid refrigerated delivery van on the continent. Owners Bryan and Cathy Gilvesy and their two children, Paula and Joe, call it the "Farmers' Market Express." This innovation puts refrigerated delivery within reach for all small producers, and its fuel efficiency exceeds every other model on the market.

We are grateful for the role that these innovative contributions play in the success of Ontario's agri-food sector. There are 45 more regional award recipients with similar success stories being recognized throughout the province.

I had the privilege, in my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, as their MPP and also as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture and Food, to attend the agri-food innovation awards in Alfred at Campus d'Alfred, which is a community in my riding. There were three awards that were given out, one to Castor River Farm, out of Metcalfe, and to Roots and Shoots Farm, out of Manotick. But why I was extremely proud to be there that Saturday afternoon was for a company called Cassel Brewery Co., right in my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, and I'll tell you a little bit about the innovative product that they've created.

Mars est la saison du sucre d'érable, du sirop d'érable et de la bière à l'érable—oui, de la bière. Chaque printemps, depuis 2008, Cassel Brewery produit une cuvée limitée de leur bière Railroad Special Maple Rye. La sève d'érable remplace l'eau dans ce brassin spécial, alors que le seigle ajoute une touche de saveur de whisky. La touche finale est une dose de sirop d'érable, ajoutée durant la fermentation, qui augmente le degré d'alcool à 8 %. Malgré les ajouts sucrés, la saveur du produit final est douce plutôt que sucrée. Ce printemps, les amateurs ont rapidement mis la main sur les 1 600 litres de la Railroad Special et ont, sans aucun doute, levé leur verre aux maîtres brasseurs de cette microbrasserie innovatrice. Je veux dire félicitations à Mario Bourgeois, Benjamin Bercier et Michel Racine de la Cassel Brewery Company Ltée, right in my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

So there are a lot of good-news stories across the province of many different businesses creating unique products and innovating in order to make Ontario's agri-food sector much stronger. These 45 regional award recipients demonstrate that the innovative spirit is thriving in Ontario's agri-food sector, and the government is proud to recognize and encourage them.

We support innovation, we support local food and we want to continue to support our agri-food sector with the proposed Local Food Act. We also want to bring more of the good things that grow in Ontario to people's tables,

whether those tables are in our kitchens, our schools, our daycares, our hospitals or our government buildings. That's why we've made investments to help increase the amount of fresh, healthy and delicious local foods in our broader public sector organizations.

We've done this by supporting the Greenbelt Fund and its Ontariofresh website, which connects buyers, including the public sector institutions, with local food processors and producers. The Greenbelt Fund's Ontariofresh website serves as an electronic marketplace for more than 1,900 Ontario food buyers and sellers.

Gordon Food Services is a great example of how our support for the Greenbelt Fund is getting more local food into our institutions. With support through this fund, they have created a special team to implement their local food strategy, and now they offer more than 800 fresh and affordable local food products to the broader public sector.

Gordon Food Services has also created an integrated regional food system with their sister organization, Fresh Start Foods. Fresh Start's three regional distribution hubs provide them with the ability to have regionally based local food lists in Ottawa, Milton and London. This integrated system enables all of Fresh Start Foods' customers access to Gordon Food's much larger Ontario list, and Gordon Food's customers the ability to source regionally specific foods.

Another example is Cohn Farms. They have increased their business by more than \$1 million per year by installing a co-packing line with greater processing capabilities. This new line now accommodates eight different farmers with 12 new vegetables. Cohn Farms also consolidated their shipping loads in order to move more products on fewer trucks and reduce their water consumption, which not only improved their costs but also their environmental footprint.

Broader public sector investment is helping municipalities too. Through our support to the Greenbelt Fund, Toronto city council adopted a local food procurement policy and reinforced their commitment to continue to support Ontario farmers by including more locally produced food in their facilities. As a result, 14 new recipes were created for breakfast, lunch and snacks, all of which incorporated at least 50% local ingredients.

Our work to get more food into the broader public sector includes foodservice operators as well. An example is Marek Hospitality, who were able to purchase software that gives them the ability to track sales and purchases, and trace the point of origin of the food on their menu. This has helped Marek identify the amount of Ontario-sourced products used in their 28 recipes featured in the frescoServe handbook. This funding has helped them to begin to assess where they are able to substitute more Ontario ingredients for non-Ontario ingredients, increasing the amount of Ontario food on offer.

Through the Greenbelt Fund, we are also working with universities and hospitals to get more food to students and patients. The University of Guelph has created

a local food processing room, which has enabled them to increase their local food procurement, and they've created student education programs to build awareness about the importance of agriculture.

The Greenbelt Fund has also helped the Meal Exchange, the food-buying group for St. Joseph's Health System GPO and one of the first health care group purchasing organizations in Canada to include Ontario food in their requests for proposals. By tendering five food contracts, they were able to increase Ontario food purchases by \$670,000, a significant 15% increase. They now look at each food category to identify local producers before tendering. Most recently, that up-front work helped VG Meats of Simcoe, Ontario, win the tender to supply protein.

Another example is the Hospital for Sick Children, which has built a network of local suppliers focused on sustainable production. They have been able to build these networks to ensure that their new menus include seasonally based recipes that are adequately serviced by their new suppliers, and they are training and educating foodservice staff about the new menu and the health benefits of eating locally sourced foods.

The Greenbelt Fund has also enabled organizations like Ecosource to work with the Peel District School Board and foodservice provider Compass Group Canada. As a result, they have incorporated local food language in their requests for proposals and contractual agreements for hospitality programs, and incorporated local food into the 2012 board-wide contract. By championing the local food movement with students, Ecosource and the board plan to implement a wide variety of local food options on all of their cafeteria menus. They will share the results of this program with school boards across the province. The Peel board has engaged more than 10,000 students through various cafeteria local food events.

1430

Almost 200 students were educated on cooking with local and healthy foods, and 42 teams of students participated in the Cooking Up Action Culinary Challenge.

These are just a few examples of the good work that Ontario's financial support to the Greenbelt Fund is doing to help organizations achieve their local food goals.

Our total investments toward this broader sector programming have resulted in \$26 million in additional Ontario food in daycares, schools, universities and colleges, or a five-to-one return on investment for every public dollar spent. We remain committed to bringing local food into Ontario municipalities, long-term-care homes, hospitals and schools.

Ensuring success is about working together. It's about collaboration right across the value chain. It's about coming up with ways that will increase the demand and supply of Ontario food, from the farm gate to the dinner plate. It depends which side of the farm gate you look at. Everything has to go on to the farm through the gate; it comes back out through the gate and ends up on our dinner plate. I just wanted to clarify that.

The local food bill is also just one part of a local food strategy. Beyond this legislation, we're also proposing more education about the benefits of local food. For example, we are providing \$400,000 per year for three years to Ontario agri-food education to help get more information on agriculture and local food into the hands of teachers and students across Ontario.

We offer more support for communities and regions working on local food initiatives, and a commitment to consult with stakeholders on the best ways to promote local food.

We will also lead by example through an Ontario government policy requiring ministries such as citizenship and immigration to consider local food for procurements under \$25,000—

Interjection.

Mr. Grant Crack: And also the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

We'll continue to promote the good things that grow here in Ontario through our Foodland Ontario program.

If passed, our proposed legislation would highlight the strong contribution that Ontario's agri-food sector makes to the province, to our way of life and to our economy. When we work together and when we choose foods that are grown and made here at home, it is good for our farmers, it's good for our families, it's good for our communities and it's good for our economy.

It's been a pleasure, Speaker, for me to speak today, but I would be remiss if I didn't speak about my home riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, where there are a lot of local food initiatives taking place.

I can speak about what happens every August at La Foire gourmande, which is in Lefavre, Ontario, in my riding. We partner up with Montebello on the Quebec side. There's a ferry that brings residents of Quebec to Ontario, to Lefavre, and vice versa. Everyone gets to sample all the great things that are being grown on both sides of the Ottawa River in le Réseau agroalimentaire de l'Est ontarien. Carole Lavigne is the lead in making sure that happens. It's a thrill for me to be able to attend every year and taste all the good things from our processors, producers and home-based businesses in the riding.

I also attended this year the Vankleek Hill Festival of Flavours. Phil Arber works tirelessly as the chief organizer. Vankleek Hill is a community not far from my hometown, as a matter of fact, Speaker—about 20 minutes. They close the main street for the Festival of Flavours. I can tell you that the main street is jam-packed for most of the day with people from all over the area, from both sides of the border, coming in, experiencing what is being grown, supporting our local food initiatives in the region. I look forward to, for many years to come, being able to continue to support two of many different initiatives in my riding.

Thank you very much, Speaker. We hope that by tomorrow, after third reading, this bill will pass and—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: You didn't talk about the Fromagerie St-Albert.

Mr. Grant Crack: Well, of course, Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, since I've got a few more minutes: Fromagerie St-Albert is a very important business, une petite industrie vraiment importante dans notre région. Ils ont eu un feu l'année passée dans le mois de février, et maintenant ils ont commencé de reconstruire l'édifice.

Fromagerie St-Albert is rebuilding. This is a wonderful employer, and I know that all members on this side of the House certainly love St-Albert's cheese. They are—what's the right word?

Interjection.

Mr. Grant Crack:—an institution in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, and how they operate is, they have partnerships with various farmers in the region. It's probably the most successful co-op, if not the only one in Ontario that is working so well. We look forward to having St-Albert's cheese rebuilt and providing more employment and more opportunities to expand their markets. They can certainly count on my support as well, and of course that of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, M^{me} Meilleur. We will continue to work together to ensure that St-Albert's cheese moves forward, completes their construction, and allows us to enjoy the good cheese that they've made for over 100 years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnett): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm very pleased to stand in this House and discuss the changes to the recent Local Food Act.

I don't know where to begin, but first things first: As someone who grew up on a farm and lives on a farm now with my husband, the issues of agriculture and food education are very near to my heart. But I will come back to that in a moment or two.

Firstly, I'd like to commend both Ernie Hardeman and Bob Bailey for their hard work to strengthen the Local Food Act. I really appreciate the fact, Speaker, that the Premier and Minister of Agriculture and Food chose to listen to the PC Party and embrace the suggestions that were really necessary to put a bit more meat on the bones, if you will, because prior to that it was sorely lacking.

As was mentioned before, the PC caucus submitted amendments to save Ontario Agriculture Week. The week leading into Thanksgiving has traditionally been about recognizing the people who put the food on our table, and it was going to be a disservice to take that week away and water it down by adding another component under the design of the current Liberal government. So I'm really, really heartened to realize that now there are going to be two times in the calendar year that we can stand up and celebrate the people who produce the food, as well as the good food grown in Ontario. That's good news when we do that and start up in June.

The other amendment that was put forward, and I think it's incredibly insightful, was the work by Bob Bailey to create a 25% non-refundable tax credit for

farmers who donate agricultural products to an Ontario food bank and community food programs. I commend that, because he outlined his rationale very well earlier today in debate, but I must say, as someone who was the general manager for a dairy co-operative, when we're looking at the development of new products and you're trying to secure that market and that shelf space, you don't always have a place for all of the production to go. So it would be nice to have that room to take that to food banks as well and get a tax credit for it.

I think this is really good news. The Local Food Act now, with the strengthened amendments, is something that we all need to be feeling good about. I just wish there were so many more people that could be here in this House to hear and understand it and see where we're going to go here.

The fact of the matter is, the tax credit that was introduced by Bob Bailey will encourage farmers to donate more food and to be more mindful of our larger picture across Ontario in terms of charitable donations. We can't do enough in terms of goodwill, and this is fantastic.

The amendments to the Local Food Act will benefit farmers, because it ensures that more people can access fresh local food and promotes valuable work at the same time, the valuable work of our farmers. I think this is very, very important because not everyone understands the work that goes into producing food in this province, or across this country, for that matter, and it's nice to tie that tax credit and the recognition in June together in that regard.

1440

I want to use my time today, though, to talk about amendments that did not pass at committee, because this is where I feel the government of the day shows a total disconnect from the overall agri-food industry, and shows how shallow and superficial some things can be from a Liberal perspective.

There was one amendment that came forward, which was voted down, that would have required the government to set real targets for local food instead of aspirational ones. Farmers across Ontario have to pencil everything out. When they are accountable to their bankers and to their family's bottom line, they have to be very real. If we're going to grow local consumption, we have to make sure that the markets are there and the realities are very much that: a reality. It's disappointing to hear that this Liberal government continues to aspire and have conversations as opposed to getting down to the nitty-gritty and establishing targets.

Then the other thing I was very disappointed about was that, for whatever reason, both the NDP and the Liberals chose not to support an amendment to make food education mandatory in all grades, to increase the knowledge of nutrition, where food comes from and cooking skills. We could go on and on about that, in many various facets, and I'm going to do that, because we've missed the boat here in a very serious manner. I'm reflecting back on some of the debate that happened already. The Minister of Agriculture stood up and asked

across the floor to the member from Sarnia-Lambton—she wondered how his tomato plant was doing right now. Well, it's November 4, Speaker, so I double-checked with the member from Sarnia-Lambton: Was the plant in a garden or in a greenhouse? He said, "A garden."

I wasn't trying to be cheeky when I said it's gone. That tomato plant is now good organic matter in the soil. People need to understand the whole cycle of plant growth. That's just one example, to name, I'm afraid, many more that have to be taken into consideration, and why agricultural education is so important.

I would love to have been able to be in a position to ask the Minister of Agriculture if the names Marjorie McDonald McIntyre, Joyce Canning and Lorraine Holding mean anything to her, as Minister of Agriculture, or to the entire Liberal caucus. Those three ladies championed and developed an amazing program called Agriculture in the Classroom when it was an OMAF program.

Astutely enough, in the 1990s, when we realized the seriousness of our cash flow in this province, there were some changes made, and Agriculture in the Classroom evolved away from OMAFRA and became a stand-on-its-own, not-for-profit organization, with tremendous support from food and commodity organizations across this province. It exists today.

Prior to October 6, 2011, I was proud to be vice-chair of Ontario Agri-Food Education. And sadly, with the NDP and the Liberals voting against an amendment to make Agriculture in the Classroom, food awareness, nutritional awareness and food preparation mandatory from grades 1 to 12, we are not completing the cycle here, and the fact of the matter is we can do much better. Our white papers—again, Speaker, we encourage all parties to take a look at our white papers, because within our respect for rural Ontario, we talk about food literacy—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Order.

I recognize the member for Huron-Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Food literacy is so important. It's very disappointing to hear that this government doesn't hold credence. Again, in terms of superficial approaches—the realities are that it's nice to stand up and have fluffy, cushy slogans, but if people don't understand how to buy in season, how to prepare in-season foods, how to preserve in-season foods, what's it all about? We've missed a big chunk of our overall ag-awareness, food-literacy, appreciation-for-fresh-food perspective in Ontario, and so there is room for improvement.

Another thing I'd like to share with you: Just moments ago, we heard the Premier, the Minister of Agriculture, tout the fact that the agri-food industry contributes \$34 billion to Ontario's GDP. That fact is true, but sorely—again, showing the gaps in the understanding of Ontario's agri-food picture—this minister fails to understand that right now we're facing a crisis in the agri-food industry. We need, over the next few years, approximately 50,000 jobs, and that number is substantiated by Lorie Jocius, the current chair of Ontario Agri-Food Education. Lorie's

husband, Ginty, founded Canada's Outdoor Farm Show. Lorie has spoken about this concern for years. We're going to have a gap. Not enough people are attracted, in terms of careers, to Ontario's agri-food industry. So again, it shows an absolute miss on the Liberal government's part for not looking at the whole picture. People just don't get it.

That's why the PC Party of Ontario is the only party prepared to go forward, with Ernie Hardeman and our leader, Tim Hudak, under the Respect for Rural Ontario white paper, and really understand how we need to move this agri-food industry forward.

Let's talk about this a little bit more. Cycling back around to OAFE just last week, how many people in this room know that OAFE launched a brand new career site? For all of you watching—which I think there will be some staff told to look for it now—it's growingcareers.ca. Last Wednesday, OAFE, under the ED leadership of Colleen Smith, launched a specific website to attract people to Ontario's agri-food careers.

But again, I come back to the absolute nonsense that—the NDP and Liberals voted against food literacy from grades 1 to 12 because included in some of that curriculum could have been careers in the agri-food system. It's not enough. We have some wonderful programs—in Chesley high school, in Clinton, in St. Anne's—in terms of the agricultural cohorts that people can participate in. But the fact of the matter is, how are kids today going to know about their opportunities in the agri-food industry if they don't learn about it in the classroom?

This is just, I think, a real eye-opener to Ontario's commodity organizations and farm groups, to re-emphasize the fact that while this government may be taking a couple of good steps in the right direction, they truly don't get the meat and bones of Ontario's agri-food industry. It's just not enough to have partnerships and to be collaborative. You need to actually get to the crux of it all. For Ontario's agri-food industry to go further, not only do we need to grow the Local Food Act, but we need to support food literacy, and we need to encourage young people to get engaged with the agri-food industry so that they can see the promising careers this industry holds in the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jonah Schein: It is my pleasure to stand up—

Applause.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you. It is my pleasure to stand up and speak today to Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 and to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to provide for a tax credit to farmers for donating certain agricultural products that they have produced. Bill 36 has gone to committee now; it has come back for third reading. We're here today. It will be voted on soon before it becomes a law in this province of Ontario.

People in this province have been waiting a long time for this government to take action on food and on local food, so I'm obviously happy to lend my support to this bill, and I hope that it does pass.

In the time that I have today, I'd like to share a few of my thoughts on the content of Bill 36 and the circumstances that have led it through this parliamentary process.

First, to speak to the content of the bill, it's clear to me that local food is a matter of great importance to the people of the province of Ontario. At committee, we heard directly from people representing farmers, from health care professionals, community organizations and processors. People wrote in to provide their written submissions, as well, from across the province.

I'm not surprised at the level of interest in this bill. Whenever I've had the chance to travel across Ontario to meet with people, people do want to talk about food. Food is on the minds of people in this province. Food remains on the minds of busy parents who are thinking about what they're going to feed their kids at the end of the day when they get home after a long day's work. It's on the minds of families who have arrived recently to this province, who are forced to depend on the food bank system here in Ontario as they try to get their feet under them in this new country. Food is also on the minds of our doctors and nurses, who have watched as a generation of children is raised on processed, sugary and salty foods.

1450

We've also heard quite clearly that food is on the minds of our educators and our teachers, who see too many of their students arrive at school in the morning struggling to concentrate because they didn't have a proper breakfast. It's on the minds of our hospital workers as they tend to our loved ones at a very vulnerable point in their lives.

Of course, food is always on the minds of our farmers, our growers and our processors, who feed this province and need the support of our government to make sure that they can bring food to the tables of people in Ontario.

Bill 36 has provided us with an opportunity to talk about food in this province, and it's a first step—an important step—toward supporting a local food economy in Ontario. It shows that the government has finally gotten the message that local food matters and that it must be made a provincial priority. But the real level of commitment in this House to issues of food security, food justice and a sustainable food economy remains to be seen, truthfully.

Bill 36 could have been a lot of things. It could have set out an ambitious agenda to support local farmers and growers, to foster food literacy in Ontario schools and to increase access to healthy food for families across this province, but unfortunately Bill 36 did not do that. Bill 36 is what's called enabling legislation, and, while it has been strengthened somewhat through the committee process, it does little to guarantee real government action. It does little to begin the transformation of our current food system.

The enabling legislation kicks the can down the road and allows some folks in a backroom at some point to make some decisions, possibly to set some sort of targets

that are unspecified at this time for the most part. Is Bill 36 stronger? Yes, to some extent. But I'd like to be clear that Bill 36 was an opportunity to do far more to support local food in Ontario. It's unfortunate that this government has missed that opportunity.

Even in committee, it was Liberal MPPs who voted against amendments that were based on recommendations that we heard from food stakeholders and that would have made this bill stronger. I think it's important for people to know that when they think about this bill.

That isn't to say that this conversation around food is over. I think that it's just beginning, and I'm glad that people came through the doors into this Parliament building to make those presentations. We need to continue to hear those voices and make sure that those voices are represented in this Parliament.

As I said, Bill 36 is enabling legislation. It requires the government to do little, but allows the possibility for more positive outcomes in the future. This means that we will have to continue to pressure this government to deliver.

Sitting on the committee that dealt with Bill 36, it was good to see the growing number of people in the food movement in Ontario come to the table and push for better legislation and stronger government action when it comes to food in Ontario. I'd like to take a moment to thank all those people who took the time to come out, sometimes on very short notice—people who made oral presentations and those who shared their written submissions with us—and to also recognize that there were people who did not get a chance to come down and make submissions; that the process was indeed rushed, and not as open as it could have been.

Getting these things on the agenda, I would say, is an important victory in itself. It's very clear that the public is well ahead of the politicians and policy-makers when it comes to these issues. The public is leading the way, and we need to thank them for pushing this government into action.

At committee, we heard loud and clear that the bill needed to be strengthened. We heard that the minister should be required to set goals or targets in respect of local food rather than leaving these optional. We heard that progress reports should be done more frequently than just every three years. We heard that regulations on small food businesses should be reduced to help local abattoirs and processors compete with the big players. We heard that the government should find ways to increase local procurement by public institutions. We heard that tax deductions should be provided for farmers and processors who donate to food banks and to community food organizations.

There was an overwhelming consensus from stakeholders on all of these suggestions, and there was also overwhelming support for increased food education and food literacy. All of these are issues that we raised and that we support.

I want to read some of the suggestions that were raised at committee. They have been summarized here by our

researcher. Thank you, Jeff Parker, for putting those together. These relate specifically to how we should set targets relating to food literacy. I'll quote here: "The minister should consider goals or targets related to food literacy and the use of school food gardens in the furtherance of the purposes of this act." This is a suggestion that was supported by groups like the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance, Sustain Ontario and the Ontario fruit and vegetable growers.

Another suggestion we heard, Speaker, was that "The minister should consider goals or targets related to food literacy and its integration into the curriculum." This was a suggestion that was made by groups like CELA, the Dietitians of Canada and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

The Stop Community Food Centre and Sustain Ontario spoke about how Bill 36 should "support food education and preparation programs, including those outside of schools." And The Stop mentioned that the bill "should provide support to student nutrition programs." This is of critical importance to people across the province.

Green Thumbs Growing Kids and the Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity both raised the important point that, "The costs of implementing food literacy programs, such as school gardens and farm trips, would be offset by the health care savings from healthier citizens." To that quote, I would say, "Obviously." That's good advice that should be heard loud and clear within these walls: that we need a health promotion strategy and that we need to be investing in the wellness of our communities. Unfortunately, that's a logic that I think too many folks in here have denied for too long.

Speaker, I think members who sat at the committee may have been a little bit surprised at the level of interest in food literacy that was demonstrated by all presenters. It was with these suggestions in mind that my colleague the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane and I worked with our NDP team to draft strong amendments to the bill. From the beginning, we said that the goals and the targets of the local food bill should be clear and that they should be defined before the bill passes. Otherwise, what's the point of voting for them? We wanted to know, if we were not to do that, what direction we'd actually be providing this province as a legislative body.

New Democrats believe that we need strong goals and targets, that we need to start to truly transform our food system, and that setting strong goals and targets sends a clear message to people that we're putting food first and that we are prioritizing local food for the people of this province. That's why we introduced amendments that would have required public sector organizations to buy local food. This would have been a significant step forward in bringing local food to market in Ontario. Unfortunately, the Liberal government and the Conservative opposition worked together to defeat this amendment in favour of public sector procurement.

We also introduced an amendment that would have required the minister to set goals and targets not limited

to but including targets and goals to: improve food literacy in schools; increase access to student nutrition programs across Ontario and increase their local food content and increase local food content in school cafeterias; increase experiential learning opportunities through school garden programs and the use of teaching kitchens in schools; and reduce regulations to encourage availability of local food without affecting food safety.

Speaker, as you can tell, the goals and targets that we brought forward directly reflect the suggestions that were made by stakeholders at committee, and so I was encouraged to see the Conservatives support these ideas for goals and targets. But it was disappointing that the government used their power on committee to defeat these positive amendments. The Liberal members that voted against it said that they did so because they were "too prescriptive." I find it disappointing that after inviting people from across the province to come in, inviting specialists to come into our Parliament to give their time and to share their thoughts with us to strengthen this legislation at committee, the government voted against the amendments that were in fact widely supported by the wider community. When these stakeholders outlined clearly for us how we can improve legislation and how we can support local food in Ontario, the government said, "Sorry; that's too prescriptive. We'll listen to you, but we'd rather just act on the bare minimum, at this time, of what you've asked, and we'll figure out the rest later. Wink, wink, nudge, nudge; trust us."

Instead, the government introduced their own amended goals and targets, and they put in the term "food literacy" in the end. Of course we supported it, because otherwise there would be no mention of food literacy or public procurement in the legislation.

1500

But unfortunately, the goal of food literacy does not even mention schools. It simply says, "Improving food literacy in respect of local food." It doesn't mention whether this would actually happen in schools. It doesn't mention whether this means actually teaching people about our local food systems, how to recognize food, how to grow your food or how to cook your food. It doesn't mention the importance of hands-on experiences for students through growing food in school gardens or cooking or eating food together in school kitchens. All of these elements were recommendations that were offered constructively by food stakeholders across the province.

By voting against our amendments, this government really missed an opportunity to set a clear path forward for increasing food literacy.

Unfortunately, the government's goals and targets make no mention, either, of supporting small, local food processors.

I regret that the government failed to support these amendments; we missed an opportunity because of that to strengthen this bill.

But the final amendments have strengthened this bill somewhat, due largely to the strong presentations made by stakeholders and their emphasis on the importance of

food literacy, public procurement and access to local food. I want to thank those folks, again, who shared their ideas with us.

The NDP was happy to put forward an amendment to require reporting every year rather than every three years. This makes good sense to folks. In fact, it was supported by folks like CELA and the Small Flock Poultry Farmers of Canada. More frequent reporting will provide us an important measure to hold this government more accountable. With the so-called enabling legislation that we see here, accountability and reporting mechanisms are very important to ensure that the government actually is taking action.

We were also happy to support an amendment that saw tax credits extended to farmers who donate to food organizations, as well as to food banks, so I would like to recognize the member from Sarnia-Lambton for bringing that issue forward as a private member's bill, recognizing in this House that there is an issue when it comes to hunger and the fact that people in communities across this province are using food banks.

The tax credit for farmers is good. It's something that I support. But quite clearly, and I think all members in this House should recognize, this is actually just a band-aid solution, because people's reliance on food banks and food charity remains the elephant in the room. This government's failure to address food security for people living on low incomes in Ontario remains deplorable. The real problem remains that too many people in this province simply cannot afford any kind of food at all, let alone nutritious food, let alone local food or sustainably grown food. Too many people just simply cannot afford food for themselves or their families.

I want to just explain to folks at home a little bit about how we got here. My colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane mentioned this briefly in his remarks. Bill 36 was part of a programming motion that was agreed upon between the Liberal government and the Conservative Party. The programming motion set aside seven bills to fast-track through this Legislature. Many of those bills were good bills. They were positive bills. They were bills that we would have supported and that should have passed through this House without any special motion necessary to fast-track them.

Unfortunately, the true purpose of that programming motion was to bundle those good bills together and to hide inside of them a little bill called Bill 74. As some people know, Bill 74 was an anti-labour bill that would have imposed a labour agreement in favour of construction giant EllisDon. EllisDon also happens to be a massive supporter of the Liberal Party of Ontario, and a strong supporter of the Conservative Party as well.

In addition—

Interjections.

Mr. Jonah Schein: People are listening now.

Unfortunately, we saw the two parties working together to fast-track this nasty piece of legislation and put the interests of Liberal and Tory backer EllisDon ahead of the people of Ontario. The two parties worked together to

pass a programming motion that ended up hamstringing the committee in the end, and it limited our capacity in committee to constructively deal with amendments.

As a result, we had to either accept all of the amendments as they were presented or reject them completely. It meant that we couldn't actually make amendments that would incorporate different proposals within the committee. In other words, we couldn't do the work that we were sent here to do and that committees are meant to address.

Speaker, if Bill 36 was not part of this programming motion—and if the Conservatives hadn't filibustered in the first place, I should say too—we could have already passed a strengthened Local Food Act. Instead, Bill 36 got tied up in an attempt by both the Liberal government and the Conservative Party to ram through a bill to benefit this one donor and this one company in Ontario.

Speaker, if you look back at the timeline—it was interesting to hear the Premier mention this earlier today—she first started thinking about this bill back in 2004, I believe. If I recall correctly, this bill was introduced just after I was elected, soon after I was elected, and I think it died on the order paper through prorogation. It was reintroduced May 16. It passed second reading with Liberal and Conservative support. Anyway, it has been about a two-month process most recently. In fact, we could have passed this bill months or even years ago, probably, Speaker, and we could have passed a stronger version.

Unfortunately, while this government worked to fast-track Bill 74, the EllisDon bill, and tied the hands of committee members who wanted to strengthen the Local Food Act, they've been working at a snail's pace, I would say, to address the larger problems that are facing Ontarians—and Ontarians without the deep pockets of an EllisDon. Mr. Speaker, where is the government's action, where is its commitment when it comes to social assistance reform? When will they take action to address the minimum wage in Ontario? When will they take action to address the affordable housing crisis in this province? When will they take action to address the recommendations that they sought through the Healthy Kids Panel? Ironically, this report was called No Time to Wait. I believe the report was tabled last spring, and we're still waiting for any action when it comes to food security and the recommendations that were made through that report.

Speaker, I will be supporting the Local Food Act, and I'm happy that we were able to strengthen the act and make it a little bit better for the people of this province. I would like to sincerely thank the stakeholders who weighed in and who made deputations. I want to acknowledge that this is an important beginning—because we know that the fight to increase access to food and to local food and to establish a sustainable food system is not over. This, to me, is one of the most important things that we should be talking about, is—how do we protect our food and water in this province, how do we make sure that we protect our environment, how is it that we reduce health costs so that people don't get sick in the first place, and how do we invest in our children, invest in the

kind of good food that they have access to? So we'll continue to push this issue to the front. We'll continue to put food first for the people of this province.

I'd like to ask the government to consider its future priorities going forward and to consider strong targets and goals for local food in the province, and to take concrete action to address the issues that hamper people's access to food across Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to add my comments on behalf of the residents of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, who sent me here.

Speaker, we are disappointed, as are the stakeholders, that this bill doesn't do more to support agriculture and food. It is a step in the right direction. It's motherhood and apple pie. How do you not say you're going to be relatively supportive of it? But we understand that to support local food you need to support our farmers on the broad scale. You need to be much more thinking of the critical issues that are impacting them in their ability to be sustainable, profitable farmers out there in our communities. This bill does nothing to address the challenges that farmers in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound are talking to me about. Those things that they're talking about are the red tape and the regulation.

Continually, this government has brought more needs to do reporting, brought more reason for them to be away from the farm—rather than actually on the land or with their animals and their livestock and their crops—and be in an office projecting more paper, moving it through the system. Speaker, it's just not acceptable.

The increasing hydro costs—we already know this government has doubled the hydro costs in the last eight years. I believe this month they're going to increase again, and there's projection that they're going to double yet again in the next two or three years. This has huge impact on our farming, as well as our broader communities, to remain sustainable and viable.

The abattoir closings—a colossal nightmare that has happened across rural Ontario. In my riding alone, a number of good, solid family businesses that have been there basically from day one have closed and will never be back. People tell me, "There's no way I would ever re-enter that marketplace with the way this Liberal government has imposed the regulations—and the changing regulations—over time on them." So they're gone, and those local farmers are now travelling 200, 300, 400 kilometres to try to get, in many cases, their beef or pork to market, just to get them to be slaughtered and be able to go to the marketplace. They could have done something a long time ago. They haven't even re-addressed it. They haven't come back and tried to find a way to bring that back so that truly local agriculture and local food could be being done in our local communities.

1510

The destruction of the horse racing industry—we've talked about this in here significantly. It saddens me, in my riding, the number of people who approach me and

say, "Again, a lifestyle, a rural fabric, a rural culture has been decimated by this government." I think the people of Ontario out there need to understand that they've just come in and announced that they're going to put \$400 million to try to rescue the sector over five years. What they glaringly omit to tell the public is that they spent \$527 million on the three-person panel to study the problem that they created. Mr. Speaker, in my world, you're not a hero if you start the fire and pour a pail of water on it. That's really what I think they've done, in that industry in particular.

We need to ensure that at the end of the day—sorry; before I go on, I should also bring up another one: this whole issue with the bees right now. There are a lot of issues going on with our bees dying in huge, huge numbers. I have a number of local producers coming to me, talking to me about it. They tell me that they don't really see the government doing anything of an action. They're going to talk, they're going to study, but they're really not getting anywhere.

I want to pay credit to my colleague Sarnia-Lambton MPP Bob Bailey for drafting a meaningful and thoughtful amendment to the local food bill to create a tax credit for farmers who donated agricultural products to an Ontario food bank. His amendment was applauded by farmers in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and by Women's Institutes.

Furthermore, our caucus also proposed an amendment to the act to require food education in the curriculum in every grade in our schools. This amendment was supported by all the Women's Institutes. Across Bruce and Grey alone, it was applauded by: Purple Grove Women's Institute in Ripley; Southline Women's Institute in Walkerton; Colpoy's Bay Women's Institute; Bruce County District Women's Institute; Park Head Women's Institute; North Grey Women's Institute; Bervie Women's Institute and Grey-Bruce Area Women's Institute.

Now, imagine the disappointment of these same Women's Institutes when this government, under the leadership of Premier Kathleen Wynne, and agriculture minister—part-time—chose to block that amendment. It's a disappointment for the Women's Institutes not only because their members passed resolutions in favour of making nutrition courses a requirement in school—it's a disappointment as the Premier and ag minister, whose political role model and hero is none other than Women's Institute founder and pioneer Nellie McClung. She's turned her back on their beliefs and principles, Mr. Speaker. It's very ironic for me because McClung was born on a farm near Chatsworth, which is in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, and she founded the Federated Women's Institute of Canada and the Women's Institute of Edmonton, of which she was the first president.

Agriculture and local food organizations submitted a large number of ideas and proposals for this bill which were ignored by the McGuinty-Wynne government. As one of my colleagues in this House stated, this started in 2004. If this was really a priority, would we not already have it implemented and be utilizing it as opposed to

talking about it again? But we go back to prorogation: They put their own bills out, then prorogue and it all dies.

Our agriculture critic, Ernie Hardeman from Oxford, put out a white paper. In that, he put forward a number of concrete ideas that would improve Ontario's food system, such as creating a regional food terminal, implementing a one-window access to government for farmers and agribusinesses, and a dedicated fund for the Risk Management Program.

Lisa Thompson spoke here just prior to me. Lisa was executive director of the goat producers of Ontario. She's got a history of family farming. She brings a lot of great credibility and good ideas, and I think she's on the same page, that there could have been so much more done.

We need to ensure that when we're doing things in this House, they're practical and pragmatic and they're going to have a significant impact; that they're going to be core fundamental changes to legislation, not tweaking around the edges, not just rhetoric and spin for the 30-second titles that they give these bills.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this bill. I wish it really had more substance and was dealing with the true issues: the cost of energy, the red tape and bureaucracy, the horse racing industry and the whole mismanagement of the ag and energy files under this Liberal government.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to represent my people of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, and I look forward to further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have an opportunity for a few minutes to speak to Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013. I did have an opportunity at second reading to speak more at length, and I just have a couple of minutes today to be able to add some comments.

I note that the bill was amended fairly substantially at committee. I think it's been improved, certainly, because it was quite light before going to committee.

I want to thank the member from Oxford, Ernie Hardeman, for the good work he's done on this, but I especially want to thank the member for Sarnia-Lambton, Bob Bailey, because I note that his private member's bill has been really taken into this bill. I think that's probably the most substantive part of the bill now, is his bill, which was previously called the Fighting Hunger with Local Food Act. That's now part of the bill. It creates this non-refundable tax credit for, I guess, excess food from farms that goes to food banks and other charitable organizations.

I note that he had pointed out that there has been some 25 million pounds of excess food, I guess you could call it, that just gets plowed under at this time, and the possible benefits of having this as part of the bill would be some five million pounds of food that could go to help out those in need. I think that's a real positive. As he pointed out, the cost of that to the government is some \$750,000, which in terms of government spending is not a lot of money, certainly, for this government. Congratu-

lations to the member from Sarnia–Lambton. He was very persistent. I think this was his third try at getting that done and it looks like it will be. We're now at third reading and nearing the end of debate. I'm really pleased to see that; I think that's a big improvement.

As has been noted, I'm pleased to see that Agriculture Week is going to be maintained in the fall. I know former MPP Bert Johnson worked hard to get that happening. Now there will be this new Local Food Week happening in June of each year.

I note that the member for Oxford pointed out that there are many more things that could be done to improve the food industry and agriculture in the province of Ontario, and we have a white paper out pointing out some of those measures, like creating a new regional food terminal and cutting a lot of the red tape that's involved with farming—I think that's true for just about any business in the province of Ontario—how much money and effort could be saved by reducing that. The member from Oxford also talked about the effect of high energy prices and the current policies of the Liberal government to do with energy prices, which are driving up energy prices, and the effect that has on the cost of food as well.

At second reading, I did have an opportunity to talk about some of the local food producers in Parry Sound–Muskoka. You don't normally think of Parry Sound–Muskoka as being a big food production area, but we do have a share of agriculture, including lots of maple syrup bushes in the Parry Sound area, places like Long's of Laurier township. We have producers like Crofter's, who make organic jams in Parry Sound. Wasauksing First Nation has Aqua-Cage on Georgian Bay—going on to businesses like Milford Bay Trout Farm. We have Iroquois Cranberry Growers and Johnston's Cranberry Marsh and cranberry wine, and the list goes on and on and on. Certainly, I want to support those businesses and will be supporting this act.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Education on a point of order.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Speaker, I know that we recognized this morning that children's aid was here to lobby. You pointed out that the good folks from Guelph and Wellington Family and Children's Services are here. I just wanted to draw to your attention that two constituents of yours, Gord and Wilma Tosh, were just recognized for 30 years of fostering 80 children. They did an amazing job. They're your constituents. Wilma was my seatmate at the Upper Grand District School Board when I was a trustee. There's a wonderful article about them in the Wellington Advertiser and you can all pull it down from the Internet.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I appreciate the Minister of Education informing the House about the contribution of Gord and Wilma Tosh. They were your constituents, I believe, prior to the redistribution in 2007, so I'm delighted that you brought their incredible public

service to the attention of the House this afternoon. Thank you very much. It's a good point of information.

Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Thursday, October 3, 2013, I am now required to put the question.

1520

Mr. McMeekin has moved third reading of Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 and to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to provide for a tax credit to farmers for donating certain agricultural products that they have produced.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I have received from the chief government whip a notice asking that the vote be deferred. Pursuant to standing order 28(h), he has requested that the vote on third reading of Bill 36 be deferred until deferred votes on Tuesday, November 5, 2013, which is tomorrow.

Third reading vote deferred.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think you'll find that we have unanimous consent that after Bill 123 receives second reading, that bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order shall be immediately called and the question put without further debate or amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to allow for the calling of third reading of Bill 123 immediately after second reading, the question to be put without further debate or amendment. Agreed? Agreed.

MEMBERS' ACCOMMODATION ALLOWANCES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES ALLOCATIONS DE LOGEMENT DES DÉPUTÉS

Mr. Milloy moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 123, An Act to amend the Executive Council Act and the Legislative Assembly Act in relation to accommodation allowances / Projet de loi 123, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Conseil exécutif et la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative en ce qui concerne les allocations de logement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the government House leader to lead off the debate.

Hon. John Milloy: Very briefly, this is a bill that has an administrative function. It clarifies the two acts that govern members' accommodation here in Queen's Park.

As I think members are aware, those MPPs who travel from more than 50 kilometres outside the Queen's Park area are eligible to receive assistance to have accommodation here in the Queen's Park area. What this piece of legislation does—it's a very simple piece of legislation based upon consultation between all three parties—is ensure that those members who will be eligible for this allowance both have a principal residence that is further than 50 kilometres from Queen's Park and also represent ridings that are themselves more than 50 kilometres from Queen's Park.

As I say, Mr. Speaker, it's an administrative clarification that amends the two acts that govern accommodation for MPPs. I'm going to be the only speaker on our side to just put on the record what this very simple administrative bill does.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I just want to echo what the government House leader said in terms of: We really see this bill as an administrative matter of closing perhaps a loophole, perhaps a misunderstanding, perhaps a mistake in the Legislative Assembly Act around members' accommodation. I think we're now adopting a fair bill, Bill 123, that makes the rules around MPP accommodation in Toronto more transparent and clear and more easily understood by all members of this assembly and, more importantly, by the people of Ontario, who pay for these allowances. Clear rules, clearly, are needed, and all three parties are agreeing today, I think, to put this legislation through and to fix the act, as probably should have been done years ago.

I want to thank Tim Hudak, leader of the Ontario PC Party. He was one of the first leaders to come out and demand that this problem be fixed. I want to thank the other House leaders in the other parties for us working together in a relatively swift fashion to make sure that there is more transparency and clarity in the act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm going to take a little bit of time in the debate because I think it's important in the context of where we find ourselves in politics in Canada and in Ontario and in our cities across Canada these days in regard to the whole issue of the integrity of our system as far as being able to make sure that everything is on the up and up and that there is transparency and that there is accountability for how we use other people's money.

All of us have seen what has been happening in Ottawa in regard to the Duffy/Wallin/Patrick Brazeau affair. Today, in fact, there's a debate in the Senate in regard to this whole particular issue. I think what it raises is that we saw what happened in Ottawa, that there was a situation where members were claiming apartments in Ottawa and not claiming their principal residence as being the one that it should have been. Clearly, that's something that the public didn't like, in the sense of

nobody begrudges a Senator or member of the provincial Legislature or the federal House of Commons the ability to have an apartment in Ottawa or Toronto in order to be able to conduct their business here. For example, I represent a riding up in northern Ontario: Timmins—James Bay. If I had to commute every day to go to work, it would be a pretty tough thing to do. We would be buying a lot of Porter Airlines tickets, I would say, for me to be able to get home every night. So it makes sense that there is an apartment here in Toronto provided by the assembly and that that be paid for in a way that is transparent and that everybody knows what it's all about. I forget what the exact amount is; I think it works out to, for us as provincial members, we're entitled to a rent of around \$1,700 or \$1,800 a month.

The interesting part is—and I've been talking to members who were just elected in the last Parliament—I've been here for 23 or 24 years, so my rent has been locked in for some time. I pay under what it is that I'm allowed to pay, but for members just coming into the House now, as of the last Parliament, a number of them are having to pay out of their pocket because the actual allowance doesn't meet the actual rent being paid. In other words, the rent is higher than what the allowance has allowed. Clearly, there's probably something that needs to be done there at one time or other, and that probably would have to be something better addressed at the Board of Internal Economy.

What's clear is, that rule was never meant to be used in a way that would be anything other than by some member who lives far away from Queen's Park and has an apartment here in Toronto. What we had here in Ontario is, we had a particular member who was claiming his principal residence being in Niagara Falls and not the actual riding that he came from. That is not what was meant by that rule. Although that was the rule that allowed that, that's not what was meant.

There was a furor, and I think I understand why, as any of us here, as we watch what's happening in the House of Commons and the Senate. We see the Duffy/Brazeau/Wallin affair and we have their situation, where it is perceived by the public that there has been some largesse on the part of those senators. If there is largesse or there isn't largesse—I will leave that to the auditors of the Senate and I will leave that to the members of the Senate to deal with.

1530

But clearly, people are upset. They say, "Hey, I go to work every day, I play by the rules, I make whatever salary it is that I have and I can only reclaim what I'm entitled to. How could somebody claim something and get paid for something when clearly it was not the intent they would be entitled to it?" So people get upset, and they say, "Well, that's not right." In the case we had here in Ontario, when it came to what happened with one particular member, a Conservative member from—I forget what the riding is—I think it's Thornhill, it was a question where he felt he was entitled, but clearly the public didn't see it the same way. The media jumped all

over it and said, “Hey, how can you do that?” So what we have here is a bit of damage control on the part of the Conservatives, trying to do what they can in order to be seen as trying to fix something that should have been fixed and never been allowed to happen in the first place.

What we have here is an amendment to the legislation that will essentially do what both the House leaders have said, which is that you can only claim an apartment in Toronto if your riding is more than 50 kilometres away and you actually live 50 kilometres away. Hopefully, that’s going to fix the problem that was addressed in the Sun, the Star, the Globe, the National Post and others that wrote about it, and in various electronic media on what happened with the member from Thornhill some time ago.

What I think needs to be said here—and I think this is something we can be proud of here in Ontario—is that the rules that apply to our expenses as members are much stricter here than they were and, I would argue, are in Ottawa. For example, we’re not allowed to expense meals—not one meal. You’re not allowed. I think you’re allowed six meals per year or six days per year if you’re travelling on assembly business and you go to Thunder Bay or Ottawa or somewhere and you have a meal. I think there’s six days that you’re allowed to charge meals as a member.

Other than that, none of us here are allowed to expense meals when we’re in our riding, none of us here are allowed to expense meals while we’re at Queen’s Park for the four or five days a week that we’re working. We’re only allowed to claim our airplane tickets to and from our riding, and you can only claim this—and this is the interesting part—if you have a receipt that shows you’ve actually expended the money and a boarding pass.

You’ve got to say to yourself, the Senate was a much different situation, where they had an honour system. The honour system was, let’s say—and it happens. Listen, the reason I deal with Youtlen Travel up in Timmins, and I encourage others to do the same, is that I get a statement every month because I travel a lot to and from Queen’s Park, and sometimes within Ontario, and it’s happened in the past where I forget to claim something because I just don’t have the receipt handy in my little portfolio. Then I find out three or four months later, when I’m balancing out my credit card, and I go, “Oh my God,” and I’ve got to chase down a receipt from the airline and I’ve got to show that I was actually on the airplane, which I think is a good thing, because what it does is it prevents members of the assembly from ever being tempted to do what you saw in Ottawa, where it is alleged—I don’t know if this is the case; I’m only saying what I read in the paper and I may stand corrected, but I understand that what Senator Wallin did was claim expenses for travel without accompanying receipts. That was my understanding. I may be wrong, but that’s my understanding. That particular Conservative senator has been investigated by the RCMP and by internal audits within the Senate. In fact, the honour system is what caused this Conservative senator to sort of stray off the path and—how would you say?—have a

little bit of largesse with the money of the people of Canada.

Again I say—and I won’t speak for the House of Commons, because I don’t know what they do there as far as expenses—that if the Senate did what we do here in Ontario, there’s no way in heck that could happen, because you have to prove that you have an airline ticket and a boarding pass for the flight of the airline ticket. It’s happened to me when I sent my expenses in that I booked a flight, let’s say, for Thursday, and ended up leaving on Friday and I got a boarding pass for Friday. I had to explain why that was, and they had to be able to trace it back to make sure that the boarding pass actually matched the airline ticket. Thank God the airline companies have this locator number, because the locator number shows it’s one and the same.

The point is, they didn’t have that in Ottawa, so certain Conservative members in the Senate and Liberals took some advantage, I would say, of the rules that existed and had a bit of largesse on the taxpayers’ dime. I think that’s sad, because when you see Conservatives and Liberals do that in the Senate, nobody takes any account—they think we’re all the same; all politicians, no matter what the stripe might be, New Democrat or otherwise, are doing the same thing. I think that’s a really sad thing because it lessens the confidence that people have in elected officials and our ability to do our jobs here, and that is to represent the people of our ridings in the policy matters that are important to them and important to this province.

When you see Conservative senators and Liberal senators do that kind of thing in Ottawa, people rightfully get mad. They say, “Hey, listen, that’s not a good thing. How can you do that when I go to work every day, I try real hard to make sure that I work hard for my boss, I get a paycheque every week or two,” whenever you’re paid, “and I don’t get to do those kinds of things? If I did, my boss would fire me.” I think they see this and they say to themselves, “How is it that you could be allowed to do that and get away with it?”

So what we’re trying to do here in the House is to tighten the rules so that what the member from Thornhill did is not something that another member in the future could do. Now, did the member knowingly break the rules? I don’t know. I wasn’t part of any investigation. All I know is that there was an apartment that was charged in Toronto when he didn’t live in his riding and actually lived in another riding down in the Niagara area. Was the member right for doing that? According to the rules—and that’s why we’re changing these rules today in the House by way of legislation—he was allowed to do that. It beckons the question, did the Conservative caucus know? Did the leader know?

I think that’s what is at issue in the fight with the said member and the leader, because they both have a bit of a different version of events when it comes to that particular issue. Was he asked ahead of time if he had the permission to do this or was he not? I think that is a fair enough question. But we’re fixing it, so I think that’s a

good thing and that's why we, as New Democrats, are saying, "Okay, listen. Anything that makes our system more transparent and more accountable, we're all for that."

As you know, one of the things that New Democrats and Andrea Horwath, the leader of the New Democrats, have been doing in this minority Parliament is a theme of making sure that we put in place mechanisms by which there is transparency and there is accountability. The people back home have to know that in the end their dollars will be taken care of; they will not be squandered in ways that we've seen, such as the gas plant debacle, where we've spent \$1.1 billion to cancel a couple of gas plants that should never have been built in the first place, and if the government had dealt with them differently, we could have let the contracts expire and it would not have cost that kind of money. People see that and they get mad.

They see the Liberal government and what they did with Ornge. We had a perfectly good air ambulance system and the government decided to change it. And what did that do? It ended up costing us another billion dollars, another scandal. Before that, it was eHealth, and now we've got the Pan Am Games coming.

I think it's important that we do everything we can to give the public confidence in our Legislature. The way you do that is by making this place as transparent as possible so that, in fact, the public has the right to know, through the process of our provincial auditor and through the process of the Financial Accountability Office which will be put in place, and the various reporting mechanisms that we currently have—that we have a way of being able to make sure there is a transparency to the money that's spent.

In Ontario, we have a pretty rigorous system. The public accounts committee has the ability, if it agrees—or the government, if it wants—to have the auditor look at any item. Now, in a minority Parliament that works really well. In this case, when it came to our wanting to have the auditor take a look at the expenses when it came to the cancellation of those gas plants, because there is a minority Parliament and because the opposition was able to work together, we had the ability by way of votes to make that happen. But if this had been a majority government, the government could have said no to the public accounts committee request to look into the cost of the gas plants and they wouldn't have called it themselves under the act.

So it beckons the question: Do we need to change the auditor's act in order to make it easier to be able to take a look at expenses once they're done and not have the government have to agree to the audit taking place? Because a majority government will never give a committee the authority to have the auditor look at something if they're not comfortable with it in a majority situation. Maybe one of the things that we need to do is to be able to change the rules around the public auditor so that there's a better way of being able to have the auditor do the type of reporting that needs to be done and look at the numbers.

Now, I take great pride, along with my NDP caucus members here, in regard to what we did with the Financial Accountability Office. We said, "Listen, we saw the gas plants; we saw Ornge; we saw eHealth. If we had a Financial Accountability Officer in place who had the ability to look at expenses before they're spent"—and that's the difference between the FAO and the auditor: The Financial Accountability Officer looks at things before we spend the money so that we can say, "In fact, how much is this really going to cost us?"

1540

In the case of Ornge, I think the Financial Accountability Officer could have looked at this and said, "Here's an expense that is going to cost us a whole bunch of money. Are we really getting any better public policy and service out of it?" I think it would have been fair to say that the Financial Accountability Office would have found, "No."

On the question of the gas plants, if the government knew, prior to the last election, that there was a Financial Accountability Officer in place and that any member of the Legislature—as we put in the legislation, as New Democrats—can call for the Financial Accountability Officer to look into anything, would they have done what they did in the last election? I don't think so. I think we could have probably saved ourselves \$1 billion.

The FAO that Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats demanded be part of the budget last spring, in fact, is going to give us some of that transparency and some of the accountability that we need so that governments—even in majority—are going to have a harder time pulling off the kinds of things they did with Ornge, eHealth, the gas plant scandal, and possibly what's going on with the Pan Am Games.

I think that's a good thing, because, again, we are just caretakers of the taxpayers' money. We are just the ones here to make the decisions about how that money is to be spent, and we need to make sure that, in the end, the money is spent in a way that is wise and a way that makes sense, and that it's not being blown on things that we shouldn't be spending the money on. We need to, here in this Legislature, take that responsibility very seriously. By way of getting the FAO, we're able to provide some of that transparency and accountability.

In the case of this legislation, Bill 123, it's a very minor amendment. It's not going to take a whole bunch of time to deal with this. It doesn't need a whole bunch of review at this point, because all it does is change one thing. It says that you must both live within the riding more than 50 kilometres away, and your riding has got to be more than 50 kilometres away. It's a pretty straightforward kind of change and I think that's why we're having a certain amount of agreement here, because this matter was actually discussed with other members of the Board of Internal Economy. They're the ones that worked at developing this language, and I trust that they looked at this and figured out a way to make that happen.

Again, it comes back to transparency and again it comes back to accountability. I ask myself: How did we

get into this mess in the first place? Why are we debating this particular piece of legislation? I've got to believe that the member from Thornhill must have gone to the finance branch before he did what he did, and he must have gone to his leader and said, "Here's what I'm going to do." All of a sudden, there are denials that that ever happened. I would have liked to see the member have an opportunity to speak on that; I take it he is busy today and can't do that, and I respect that, but I'd just, on behalf of that member, say that it must be a pretty tough thing to take. I don't agree that what he did was right, but the way this whole thing was dealt with was rather Conservatives-ish, if you know what I mean. It was a question of them trying to do political damage control once the barn doors were open.

Is that the way that we should be dealing with legislation? I think not. That's why Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats proposed, in the last budget, as a condition for support, that there be a Financial Accountability Office—in other words, that we look at the dollars before you open the barn doors, and that you decide, "How much is this really going to cost to do, and are we getting a good bang for our buck?"

I think the ability to be able to look at those things in an open way and a transparent way will allow all of us to do our jobs a lot more easily and a lot better, because in the end we need to make sure that we are as fiscally prudent as we can be with the taxpayers' dollars. We look at people back in our constituencies who work hard every day, who go to work, do the right thing and try to pay their bills, and they've got to give money to provincial, federal and municipal governments in order to provide the important services that they need.

I don't think anybody begrudges paying money so that mom or dad or your child—whoever—has good health care services available in a public system. I don't think anybody begrudges the fact that we have a good system of public education. I don't think anybody begrudges that we have to have a transportation infrastructure system, both inside our cities and outside our cities, that works well.

I don't think the public has a problem with that. I think the public feels that we probably pay more than we'd like to. I don't know anybody that I've run across over the last number of years who said, "I'm really happy paying taxes. I would love to really pay more." I think everybody is feeling the squeeze, and they're saying, "Jeez, I'm having a hard time trying to make ends meet."

When they see these kinds of things which happened with the Conservative senators in Ottawa, or what's happened with the Conservative member here in Toronto, at Queen's Park, they say to themselves, "Why should I agree for you to increase my taxes if you can't get your own spending under control and you're allowing these kinds of things to happen?" I think we need to make sure that we have transparency in the system and we need to make sure that we're as accountable as possible when it comes to the ability to spend the money of the people of Ontario.

I'm more and more taken aback in my constituency, and I imagine everybody in their constituencies are seeing the same thing as me. We're seeing more and more people in our ridings who are having an increasingly harder time to make ends meet. I was at a funeral yesterday. My cousin's son Paul passed away—32, 34 years old. We were at his funeral. It's pretty tragic that a young man of that age is no longer with us. But as I was sitting there talking to people at the funeral, their topic of discussion—everybody my age and a little bit older—was talking about how they can't afford to retire because hydro has gone up. Everything has gone up to the point that they're not able to retire because they don't have adequate pensions, or no pensions at all, in all the cases of the people I talked to yesterday, and they're feeling squeezed.

I look at a neighbour just behind me who a couple of months ago ended up selling his house because he needed the equity for him and his wife to be able to survive. They moved into an apartment. Why? They couldn't afford to keep the house going, because by the time they paid their hydro, their gas, the taxes and everything else, they were having a harder and harder time to make ends meet. They look at us and they say, "What? I see a senator doing what? I see the Conservatives in Ottawa doing what? I see the Conservatives in Toronto doing what?" And they say, "My God, certainly to God we shouldn't allow this to happen," and they get mad—and rightfully so.

I think it's important that we pass this legislation and we allow the rules to be tightened up so that this kind of thing can't happen in the future. I think that's a step in the right direction. But I go back to the need to be able to provide that transparency and accountability for the people back home. In the end, if we cannot demonstrate, as legislators, that we're serious and we're vigilant and we're frugal in the way that we spend the money that is entrusted to us to spend on behalf of the people back home, then I think we lose not the confidence of this House, we lose the confidence of the people back home. I think it's important that we do what we can in order to make this—how would you say?—a much more accountable system.

I look back at the debate that we had—and we're going to have a chance when we get to the opposition day motion with the Conservatives this week, I believe on Wednesday. I look back at Mr. Hudak and his positioning on the budget last year. It would have been really easy for New Democrats to play the game that Mr. Hudak played: Throw up your hands in the air and say, "Oh, well, we're opposed to everything. We're just going to say no to whatever comes through. We're not going to try to make any changes because our job is to try to serve our political interests and get elected." Well, New Democrats said, "No, that's not the way this place should work." The people in the last election said what? There's going to be a minority Parliament. They gave a punishment to the Liberals by taking away the majority but they didn't kick them out of office. I don't like that. I would

have rather they had elected New Democrats to office. But I have to respect what the people of Ontario said, and what the people of this province said is that there's a minority Parliament here. With the minority Parliament comes a responsibility for us to respect what the voters back home told us. It's a little bit the same as what we're talking about in this bill, Bill 123, when it comes to accountability, how we spend their money. Should we have apartments outside of our ridings? Shouldn't we? All of that kind of stuff. We have to make sure that we try as best as we can within this minority Parliament to make things work and get results for people.

So Andrea Horwath and New Democrats, in the first budget and then in the second budget, managed to get some pretty important concessions from the government in their budgets to be able to get those budgets passed. Was it easy? Hell, no. Was it something that was so easy to do that we were just laughing all the way to the vote? Absolutely not. Mr. Hudak and the Conservatives kept on saying that the only way that you can fix the problems that are going on in Ontario was to defeat the Liberals and vote in a Conservative government. Well, I beg to differ. I watch what happens with the Tories in Ottawa, with Mr. Harper; I look at what the Tories have done in the Senate when it comes to expense scandals; I take a look at what just happened in their own caucus and why we're having this debate, and I say, "Do I really want to put those people in charge? I don't think so." I think, in the end, what we need to do is to do the best that we can, and New Democrats got concessions from the government around the Financial Accountability Office and other measures in order to make the spending of the money of the people of Ontario more accountable. We're in the process of now putting forward—we've passed that legislation and we're in the process of now naming our nominees to the committees that will hire the FAO.

1550

The other part is what we've done with the gas plant committee. If we had listened to Mr. Hudak last spring—again, it's a question of accountability. Do we go to an election or do we allow the committee to finish its work? We decided it was best to allow that committee to do its work and come back with its recommendation on how to prevent this kind of expenditure in the future—because that's really what the public wants. The public wants to punish; I understand that. The public does want somebody to pay for this. I get that. In my riding, I hear people talk to me about that all the time. But it's also a question of we have to put measures in place that stop this kind of stuff from happening in the future. That's what we're doing here today, amending this legislation. We're preventing the situation, such as what happened to the member from Thornhill, who found himself in the position of thinking he had the permission of his caucus and thinking he had the permission of the Legislature to do what he did, and then be told that, no, he never had that conversation. I can imagine he must feel pretty upset about that, because I know the member from Thornhill. I don't agree with his politics; I find him much more extreme than me

when it comes to most items. He is extremely on the right, I would say. But on this one, I think that he genuinely thought that he had the agreement of his party leader to do what he did. Then all of a sudden, he finds out the party leader says, "No, I don't remember that." So whose version of the truth—I shouldn't say that. I take that back because it would be out of order to say that. But whose version of events is the correct one? Is it the member from Thornhill's or is it the leader of the Conservative Party's? A fair question.

We're tightening up the rules nonetheless. We're saying under this particular bill, Bill 123, that there is going to be a stronger measure, a stronger standard applied to who is able, first of all, to get an apartment in downtown Toronto, and that the requirement is that you have to live within that particular riding so that you can't be in the situation that the member from Thornhill found himself in, where he thought he had permission from people to have his house in Niagara as his principal residence and then have his apartment paid for here in Toronto. This rule clarifies that and says you both have to have a riding that's 50 kilometres away from Queen's Park and you also have to live within that riding. I think that clarifies this type of thing from happening in the future.

Who knows? The unfortunate truth here is that if that rule would have existed—and I don't think any of us thought about this before because it's the first time I've heard of such a thing happening in the 24 years I've been here, and as far as I know, I don't think it has happened before. It might have and nobody noticed; I have no idea. But if this rule had been in place, the member from Thornhill could never have been put in a situation where he did what he did. He did so thinking he had permission from the Conservative leader, Mr. Hudak. Mr. Hudak says, "No, I never gave him that permission." Who there is the one who remembers the version of events correctly? Only their conscience can tell. All I know as a legislator and as a New Democrat is that we have an issue, and that issue has to be fixed. The compromise that was found—it's not even a compromise; it's a way of re-drafting the legislation that the board and others have come up with as a way of being able to close the loop on that particular one.

I would be remiss if I didn't talk about the machinations of what's happening in Toronto with regard to this particular issue. We see the same kind of thing, where there's a real sense on the part of the public that things are not the way they should be when it comes to the integrity of members and the integrity of our word. I look at what's happening in the city of Toronto and I say, "How does that help politics in this province when you see these kinds of things happening?" You see what happened with the member from Thornhill. You see what's happening with the mayor of Toronto, Mr. Ford. You see what's happening with Conservative senators in Ottawa, with Liberal senators in Ottawa. One has already resigned, a Liberal member, because of expenses that he shouldn't have incurred that he did. I think he was

actually charged, if I remember correctly, and you've got three others who are in the process of the same. It shakes the confidence of the public when it comes to how they feel about their confidence in their members and their confidence in our institutions.

I just want to say to those who are reading this debate later in Hansard and those who may be watching that what we're attempting to do with Andrea Horwath and the New Democratic Party is say, "Listen, we're not holier than anybody else. We don't pretend to be without our own little foibles." I'm sure if you all went looking, we all have our own little foibles—and I'm not saying about expenses and stuff; I don't think that's happening. But my point is, we have been working hard to put in place measures that account for transparency and account for accountability, so that in the end the public can have a better sense of, "You can have confidence in this particular institution."

With that, Mr. Speaker, I've pretty well said what I had to say. I only wish that at one point we can find ourselves in a position where the member from Thornhill and the leader of the Conservative Party can come together and remember what actually happened so that within their own caucus there's a better understanding of what the events were and that not one or the other is penalized one way or another. I have to hope that at one point that's going to happen within the Conservative caucus, but I'll leave that to them.

All I know is what we're in control of and what we can do here. What we can do is try to fix this rule, as we are doing right now, so that, in the end, in fact, this type of thing can never happen again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Further debate?

Mr. Milloy has moved second reading of Bill 123. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): In accordance with the order of the House passed earlier this afternoon, the bill is ordered for third reading.

MEMBERS' ACCOMMODATION ALLOWANCES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES ALLOCATIONS DE LOGEMENT DES DÉPUTÉS

Mr. Milloy moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 123, An Act to amend the Executive Council Act and the Legislative Assembly Act in relation to accommodation allowances / Projet de loi 123, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Conseil exécutif et la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative en ce qui concerne les allocations de logement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

WASTE REDUCTION ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES DÉCHETS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 31, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to establish a new regime for the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 91, Loi créant un nouveau cadre pour la réduction, la réutilisation et le recyclage des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le réacheminement des déchets.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was having a discussion with my colleague the member from Timmins–James Bay and I thought that the rotation was presently with the Liberal Party. I guess I was mistaken.

I'm not sure whether anyone else will be speaking to this, but I thought it important that I stand up in the 10 minutes I'm given to just talk a little bit about this. I would like to preface my remarks on the debate with how long this debate has been taking place in Ontario.

I go back many, many years ago to the former government of Metropolitan Toronto. When I was the mayor, I served on the Metropolitan Toronto board, and I remember the significance and the passion of the debate that we were having as the blue box was introduced to Toronto. There were people there who were opposed to the blue box and thought that we should just sort everything by hand or have electronic sorting of the materials as they came from the garbage truck—how expensive it was going to be—and there was a lot of stuff being debated about packaging and user pays and producer pays, and it's all come full cycle to me. After 20 years, we're back here in exactly the same place, arguing exactly the same things.

The city of Toronto then, or then, Metropolitan Toronto, determined to go away from reuse and instead went to recycling, which is the third phase of the process of reduce, reuse and recycle. We should always remember that that is the order in which we should be doing things. The city of Metro Toronto, in its wisdom, back in those days, decided to go down the recycling route because it was convenient, because they thought that's what consumers wanted and because the producers of things like plastic pop bottles were convinced that this was cheaper and better for them in the long term than having returnable pop bottles. They did this because they thought it better to recycle a great many things rather than to simply reduce them.

1600

I think about all the debates that we had over newspapers. There was a time when we put newspapers out in the blue box in the borough of East York and we had to hire people to drive around the streets to make sure that

those newspapers were not stolen. I don't know if people remember this, but the market for used newsprint grew so high because the United States, particularly in Chicago, determined that they wanted to use 100% recycled fibre in their newspapers. The big daily newspapers in Chicago were going worldwide to try to find that fibre, including coming to Toronto. The market shot way up, so there were enterprising people in the city of Toronto who were driving around in trucks, taking the newspapers out of the blue boxes. We, in East York, had to hire people to go around in cars at night to make sure that when the recycled paper was put out, it was still there in the morning so that we could pick it up and East York and Metropolitan Toronto could get the revenues from it. This is the kind of excitement that could be built someday around this, so I just wanted to hearken back to those memories.

This is a bill that is being discussed yet again. It has been discussed my entire political life, and I look at this bill and think: What is new in the body of this bill? I went down and looked at the bill, and the bill is a relatively complex one. The bill talks about many things—not many of them, though, very well.

It talks about going toward 0% waste. We all want zero waste. If there was no waste, it would be a whole lot better environment in this country and in the world than with the production of waste that we're currently into.

The bill talks grudgingly about the three Rs, the hierarchy being reduce, reuse and recycle. As I've already said, we have never come down to the number one principle, and that is: We should be reducing everywhere we can possibly reduce—the reduction of the use of energy, the reduction of packaging, the reduction of production facilities. Everything that we can do to reduce waste should be done first, and to reduce what we, in fact, have ourselves.

When I go into the supermarket, they always ask me if I want a plastic bag. Of course, they charge a nickel for it. I don't refuse it because it costs a nickel; I refuse it because I don't really need it. We don't really need to have all of those bags produced that are handed out, some of them for free, some of them for a nickel; it depends on the store you shop at in the city or the place you shop at in Ontario. We need, as consumers, to say that we don't need that.

When I look at packaging, especially packaging aimed at children, it's huge packaging. We don't need that kind of packaging. What we need is something to contain the product, to keep it new and pristine, if that is what you're looking for. That's what we need.

When I look in the body of the bill, I don't see a whole lot around reduction, and I don't really see a whole lot around reuse as well. I think immediately to the big debates that took place at Metro Hall 20 years ago. The big debate was about pop bottles, about returnable bottles, which were largely made out of glass, versus those new ones that were made out of plastic and would be recycled and melted down and made into something else. I remember that debate as clearly as if it was yesterday.

Those of us on the one side—and I was one—thought that the reuse of those glass bottles was the most energy-efficient thing that we could possibly do with those glass bottles. The use of a glass bottle for one use is absolutely wrong; it verges on the criminal. To this day, I know of pop bottles—you can hardly find them anymore, if you can find them at all—that are made out of glass and returnable. I still see them when I go to the east coast, but I haven't seen any in Ontario for years, and I doubt very much there are any left, anywhere at all, in this entire province.

When you go to the Beer Store, you see that 85% or 90% of the bottles are returned and reused. What wasn't good for pop anymore is still the mindset for beer. All of us, when you drink beer, know that that bottle has been used many times. It has been used many, many, many times. It has a shelf life of about 20 times, on average, before it gets too old, too scratched or too broken to be used again.

But when you go to the liquor store to buy wine, my goodness, that wine bottle is used once. It is used once, and it is never used again. The only purpose in you taking back and getting 20 cents for that wine bottle is so it can be crushed and used again in a road. That's pretty much all it is used for. This is not an efficient use that we are making of it.

I will tell you that if Ontario insisted that its wineries—and we have some excellent wineries in three major regions; in fact, across this entire province—insisted that wine be sold in bottles that could be returned and reused, we would start a revolution. There are countries on this planet that do exactly that. It's done in France; it's done in Spain, where the bottles are returned.

There are only two types of generic wine bottles used in Ontario and, in fact, much of the world. I know you can get a wine bottle that looks like a cat, and I know you can get one that's carved in 100 different ways and has all kinds of fancy stuff on it. But 95% of all the wine bottles you find in the liquor store are of two types: There is a Bordeaux type, which is cylindrical, and there is a Burgundy type, which is flask-shaped. They're common. Those are the two that are used in Ontario.

If we had those bottles and we could use them again, all we would have to do is put on ordinary, natural glue—not the synthetic stuff, because it's too hard to get the label off. You can actually soak the bottle, and they'll fall off, if you get a French wine bottle or a Spanish one. You soak the bottle and they fall off. What we need to do is use those bottles again.

To produce each of those bottles costs about 80 cents, and they're crushed. If we could take them back and they could use them again, then each wine manufacturer in Ontario could save 80 cents. That may not sound like a lot, but if you can reduce the cost of that wine by 80 cents, then you can start to compete more favourably with wine from somewhere else.

I'm telling you that there is a reason for doing that, and we need to start looking at reuse in this province. We can no longer just say we want to recycle; we need to

start looking at reduction, and that's the place I would start. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise on Bill 91. There are a lot of, I think, good points that have been made. The committee process is what follows, should this bill pass. If it is allowed to pass, certainly we'll be able to hear from the stakeholders. If there are any amendments that need to be made to make this a better bill, that would be the time to do it. So I would urge the opposition parties: Let's move on, on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I've always liked to listen to my good friend the member from Beaches–East York. He's very sensitive, very inclusive in his remarks, except when it comes to this topic. He seemed to be somewhat unnecessarily outraged on this whole idea of including recovery. An important part of the three Rs—reduce, reuse and recycle—is to recover.

All matter is in one of three forms: liquid, solid or gas. We can't waste resources; we'd all agree with that, okay? It could be a gas that goes into making wraps and various packaging materials, and when you apply temperature to liquid, it becomes a solid—ice. I'm saying that they're overlooking the science of where we are today, and I think it's wrong.

But this government has failed completely. If you look at the history here, the largest contributor to the whole waste cycle we're dealing with is industrial-commercial waste: the spent lumber, the drywall, the various things when they're renovating buildings and stuff. All of it today—60% of the whole waste stream, comes from that ICI sector. This government has taken us down the wrong road. These are the statistics; this isn't political. That's worse, okay?

1610

When you look at the residential—this is from the Ontario Waste Management Association. These are people who believe in the environment, unlike just the words. They've gone in the other direction in the residential component as well; they've gone down in that as well.

The record speaks for itself, and I can only say this: If the member from Beaches–East York is right, we need to talk about it, and it sounds like the government side doesn't want to talk about it anymore. This bill hides the real cost of the eco tax, and I'll have more to say later, I'm sure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to comment on the member from Beaches–East York. I don't know where the member from Durham found that the member from Beaches–East York was outraged. I mean, we've seen outrage in this House. There are good reasons to be outraged in the province of Ontario when you consider the waste, which is a good transition to the waste diversion act.

We've just come from a completely different place with regard to this piece of legislation. We admit that it needs to be improved, but it's long overdue. It took a long time to get here, and I know there are some producers out in the province of Ontario who want us to drag it out a little bit more. We do believe this debate is important, and we actually want to strengthen the legislation when it does get to committee. Certainly, we will be bringing a very different lens to the conversation, as opposed to the PCs, who I assume are not going to be supporting it—but as we know, they haven't been supporting much in the last two years.

It does remind me of that the Tragically Hip song *Wheat Kings*. There's a great line in that song. I don't know if the Tragically Hip have been quoted in this House before, but in the song *Wheat Kings*, the line is "no one's interested in something you didn't do." I think, actually, there's good evidence in the province of Ontario that people are not interested. One has only to read Mr. Regg Cohn's piece today: "*Hudak's Scorched Earth Strategy Isn't Working*." There are lots of things burning in the province of Ontario, and let's get that under control.

We are going to be bringing a lens to this debate at committee around understanding the market before regulating the market. We've done extensive research, and we've actually consulted with some of the front-line people in the province, and the Ontario Waste Management Association in particular. We are going to be bringing some integrity to this waste management act. We look forward to that work. That's why we're here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to speak to Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act. I've heard a lot of good things in this Legislature from the New Democratic Party, that they're very supportive of many parts of this bill. We've had a lot of debate on this now, so I'm looking forward to getting into committee, hearing from the industry and getting on to that phase. I think we should move this out of second reading, into committee, and get on with it.

This is a good bill. It needs changes, but we have good support from the New Democratic Party, from what I've heard from their members, and I look forward to that part of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments, and I return to the member for Beaches–East York for his reply.

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank the members from Oakville, Durham, Kitchener and Orléans for their comments.

To my two Liberal colleagues: They want to get on with the bill, and, yes, I think we need to get on with the bill at some point. I don't know how many other speakers there are.

I did feel compelled to speak today, though, because I think the whole issue about the return of wine bottles—to know that when you're taking them back, they're simply going to be ground up and then the same thing done with them again, either production of new wine bottles or

they're put into a road somewhere—it seems to me that an awful lot of energy and an awful lot of waste is occurring in that production. If we can find it in our hearts to recycle beer bottles 20 times, we should start thinking about whether we can recycle wine bottles and, in the process, actually save the wineries a great deal of money and the consumers a great deal of money, because if they can be used again—and most of them can; most of them are generic—then that's why I felt I needed to speak to that.

The member from Durham talked about science, and in fact, I think he's wrong. On Earth, there are only three forms, and he's correct in that. There is the gaseous form, a liquid form and then, of course, a solid form as things cool down. But there are other forms known to science, and I would suggest he talk about plasma, perhaps, as well.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, no, plasma is also a form, but it's under extreme pressure and heat, something we're not likely to find here. But it is a fourth element.

As for the member from Kitchener, I thank you for your quote from the Tragically Hip. I had never heard that before. I have heard the group sing, but I had never nuanced that exact phrase, and I think it's a wonderful phrase. If you don't mind, I may steal it from you at some future time because it's really important: Nobody wants to listen for something you've never done. I think that if people are critical and if people want to make changes, then they have to lead and not just simply stand back.

I thank everyone for their comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 91, which is An Act to establish a new regime for the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002.

Just off the top, I'll say that I think this government is taking the wrong approach to recycling and reusing of waste, and I'll talk a bit about that as we go forward. It was back in 2005 that I actually had a private member's bill, the product stewardship bill, that was debated here in the Legislature and was supported and passed. I believe all three parties supported it at that time. It really suggested a different approach: For industry to take responsibility for their waste and to have full life-cycle responsibility for whatever waste they create, whether it's the packaging or anything involved with various products. I'd like to go back to that because I think it's a better approach, and it's actually one that our party has adopted. Our party has suggested that, "Under our plan, government would set measurable and achievable recycling targets, establish environmental standards and measure outcomes." That's the sort of approach that my private member's bill took. It would return oversight back to the Ministry of the Environment, where it truly belongs.

Mr. Speaker, the reason I think that approach works is that government really is in the business, then, of setting the recycling targets for any given product and setting the standards they want to see achieved, but it lets industry figure out how to do it to achieve the results and do it in the most cost-effective manner. They have an inherent interest to want to do that because they're the ones that are going to be paying for it. Whereas the system the government is setting up is one that's really being run by government, and government has proven many times that it's not that great at running things, so the costs go up and you don't necessarily achieve any better results. In fact, you probably achieve poorer results.

I would also say, when you're setting up sort of a unique program to Ontario—I mean, you have national companies operating across the country, and you end up with a different system in every province. I've received correspondence from companies like Sony that want to see a national program and point to other provinces like BC that have been so much more successful.

It was back in May 2005, May 19, when I was debating my product stewardship bill, which essentially puts forward the same idea.

"So what is product stewardship? It's a management system based on industry and consumers taking full responsibility for the products they produce and use, from their inception through to their final reuse or recycle state. It's cradle-to-cradle management. The way it works is that government, on behalf of consumers, has three supportive roles.

"First, it identifies which products it wants embraced, establishes targets for product capture and charges industry with the responsibility of forming a management board and preparing stewardship plans. Second, it assists industry by putting in place regulations to support the collective industry approach and ensures a level playing field for all corporations involved in the relevant sector. Third, it approves stewardship plans, monitors industry progress and ensures that plans are altered to achieve overall objectives.

"Through this product stewardship approach, government moves away from funding, at taxpayers' expense, waste management. Instead, it holds industry responsible for the full life cycle of a product but leaves it to industry to find the most cost-effective and efficient way to achieve it, assisting where necessary and desired....

1620

"Product stewardship works because industry comes up with the solutions. They know their business best, and they will come up with solutions that are both cost-effective and that get the job done."

That was back in 2005, and I think that's still the better approach now. Certainly it's supported in the correspondence I've been getting with concerns on this bill.

I note that Sony, obviously a large corporation, has written to MPPs with their concerns. They've got programs in effect across the country that work. Their program is called the Electronic Products Recycling Association. I'd just like to quote from the letter they've

written to MPPs to demonstrate their concerns and how their approach is more like the one I just described, from my private member's bill of 2005.

This is the letter from Sony. It reads:

"Through the Electronic Products Recycling Association, our industry has developed a nationally harmonized, non-profit organization to operate diversion programs for waste electronics in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, Nova Scotia, PEI, and Newfoundland and Labrador. EPRA has been able to achieve great efficiencies through shared resources and economies of scale that have resulted in improved diversion performance and lower costs.

"Sony is of the strong belief that those producers that are involved in the design, manufacture, distribution, and sale of products are best suited to develop and manage end-of-life management programs for those products. Sony's own recycling program and the creation of EPRA has demonstrated that—when afforded the responsibility of crafting the right program for the right audience, industry—can excel."

They go on with a long list of concerns with Bill 91. I won't read them all, but it goes on: "Sony would prefer an environment where the provincial government mandates what it would like to see in such a program, and that industry manages this responsibility individually or through their chosen, collective intermediaries, or a combination of both." That's exactly what I was talking about in my product stewardship bill of May 2005.

They go on to say:

"In other provinces the electronics industry works directly with the provincial government to set expectations and industry has the sole discretion to implement and manage these programs to achieve the agreed-to outcomes. In these provinces, roles and responsibilities are clear, industry is fully accountable, and stakeholders are satisfied. Unfortunately, the approach to date in Ontario has been for government and its agencies to become unnecessarily involved in the minutiae of program design, development and operation. This has resulted in a highly inefficient structure unable to respond to a rapidly changing environment and where all stakeholders are dissatisfied with the program.

"Bill 91 continues the highly complex and prescriptive approach. We do not believe a complex piece of legislation is necessary for managing waste electronics.

"Fortunately, Ontario already has a suitable legislative framework that can easily accommodate waste electronics and replicate the successful model used in other provinces—the Environmental Protection Act. Similar to how pharmaceuticals are managed under the EPA, so too could electronics. We ask that electronics be removed from the scope of Bill 91 and be more efficiently regulated under the EPA."

That's the approach that I think makes a lot more sense, and would achieve better results.

I also heard from Magazines Canada. They wrote, and they're unhappy with the legislation as well. They say, "Magazines Canada is a member of a coalition of Ontario

industry associations representing over \$300 billion of business activity and nearly one million jobs. We have submitted a response to the draft act. The submission argues that, if enacted as drafted, the act will be as bad—or worse—for the taxpayer and the environment as the current problematic and flawed waste diversion system.

"Additionally, Ontario's magazines, the largest of the provinces' cultural media, have submitted their own point of view on the damage the current regime causes and the potential for even more damage triggered by the new act. Over 75% of Canada's vibrant \$2-billion magazine media is based in Ontario. We employ 9,400 people in this province, all in high-value jobs.

"We are aware that there is less consensus today, even within many groups who had supported this legislation when it was introduced. At the same time there appears to be increasing unease in all camps about the efficacy of this draft act.

"We ask that you urge your colleagues in the Legislature to take a big step back from this act and to objectively review it in the context of the public good. We are ready to assist in a constructive process."

So, Mr. Speaker, there you have it, from Magazines Canada—a huge industry. Another industry asking for a different approach to waste diversion in the province of Ontario. I sincerely believe that we're on the wrong track here, that we'll not achieve the environmental benefits we want to see achieved and it will cost a lot more for businesses and for consumers.

I would like to see this government change their approach, although it doesn't look like they're going to. Obviously, they're trying to push through this legislation. But I wanted to get the concerns of industry out there and register that I think we're going down the wrong path.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm glad to contribute to the debate here today. One thing that we shouldn't be proud of is the province of Ontario's record on waste diversion. We have one of the worst records in all of Canada. This bill should be taken very seriously by all of us that we need to do something for our environment and we need to make sure that the waste that we produce is handled responsibly.

Some of those things that we should be considering about this bill is, we need to recognize—and the member from East Beaches—York—

Mr. Mike Colle: East York-Beaches.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: East York-Beaches—now I know, Speaker, what your challenge is when you have to remember everybody's riding.

One of the things he talked about, and we've mentioned this before, is the three Rs. Those are paramount to waste reduction. When we talk about waste reduction, it's reduce, reuse and recycle. I know a lot of people in the London community in my riding do their part. When he talked about going to the grocery store and saying, "No plastic bags," they bring their recycling bags; they put their blue boxes out.

But we still need to do more. We need to be more progressive when it comes to waste reduction and educating the public. Making sure that waste reduction is convenient will go a long way towards the consumer participating in diversion and waste reduction because it does start with the consumer. If we consume less and actually put the packaging out to recycle, that is going to help waste reduction.

So the big part of this as well is making sure that the public is aware what vision we have going forward so that they can participate and be partners and make a difference in waste reduction and diversion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to speak in support of Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act. In fact, quite a few people have spoken in support of Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act. The debate has now been going on, Speaker, for almost 11 hours. Just to give the viewers some sort of rule of thumb, the standing orders actually allow a vote to be taken after six and a half hours—or earlier, if all parties agree.

So we've talked about this for 11 hours. People have suggested various improvements to the act. The place where that occurs is in committee. I respectfully suggest we need to get on with a second reading vote so it can go to committee and people can talk about how it could be improved.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I stayed here primarily this afternoon to listen to our speakers. The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka's remarks were, I think, reflective of what I'm hearing. In fact, he made reference to the input from Doug Wilson who is the president and chief operating officer of Sony Canada. Now here's what they said. It's important if members would listen: "Sony"—much like Tim Hudak—"supports changes to the current legislative framework that, in our opinion, has led to greater inefficiencies in the diversion of waste electronics in Ontario"—greater inefficiencies.

1630

"That said"—I'm quoting—"while Sony supports placing greater responsibility and oversight on industry, it's our belief that, as written, Bill 91 will continue many of the same inefficiencies...."

He's got it right. This bill is strictly a cover-up. What it does is bury the price inside the eco fee. Today, when you buy batteries, there's a charge on the bill that you can see on there. It says, "Waste reduction eco fee." It's in addition to the price, but now what you're going to see on it—it's hidden, and the transparency and the accountability are lost.

The consumers say, "How come these batteries are now \$20 for 10, instead of \$18?" We don't even know what the price is going to be. It could go from \$18 to \$25. Where's the money?

He goes on to say that all-in pricing doesn't work. It's going to lead to higher costs and less accountability.

They did a very excellent presentation, and I think the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka—to look to business, I think they need oversight; there's no question about it. But what I will say is, they want to work—I think the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka talked about the Electronic Products Recycling Association. I'd look further into that before we move further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's again a pleasure and privilege to stand on Bill 91 and have some discussions on it. We've really stalled for a very long time on this initiative; as a matter of fact, for 20-plus years now.

I tend to bring things back home. I was trying to have a discussion with my boys, over the course of the weekend, on the importance of recycling and the point of reducing and reusing. Some of our discussions that we had—and this is not a prop, this wonderful thing that we have here, or maybe another little computer doohickey that my boys purchased over the course of the weekend. The thing was probably as big as this paper clip, but by the time we finished unwrapping the darn thing, we had some that went to the plastic; some of it went into the cardboard and the other part of it went into the metals. So there are certain things that we can certainly improve and change when it comes to waste reduction. Just the packaging is so enormous on some of these items that we're purchasing; it is so much waste.

When I'm talking to my kids—and they have eyes; they look within the community and they see people participating in the waste diversion program. It's unfortunate and frustrating for them to see wasted opportunities to really capitalize on a good program, where people follow their waste—they take the time to put it into their blue bin. They grab the blue bin and they go put it over at the designated area and dump it in.

But on the weekend, you pick up your leaves and your pins that are on your lawn. Over the course of the weekend, you load them up on your truck and you go bring that to the waste site, and what do you find: the garbage that you actually put into the waste disposal areas. So there are definitely ways that we need to improve it to make it more efficient for everybody to use.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you to the member from London–Fanshawe, the Minister of Education, the member from Durham and the member from Algoma–Manitoulin for their comments.

The Minister of Education was saying, "Get on with it." We're debating this bill and continuing to debate it because we don't like the approach the government is taking. As I've outlined, I think it's the wrong approach. I think it's an approach that will cost consumers more and lead to fewer products being diverted.

The member from Algoma–Manitoulin was talking about packaging. I agree with him; I don't like to see excess packaging. But if you come up with a product

stewardship approach where industry is responsible for everything to do with the product, including the packaging, then they have to design packaging that doesn't cost a lot to be dealt with and/or is minimized. I really believe that the product stewardship approach, where government doesn't try to run the system—they set the targets, monitor the targets and police it, but they don't try to run it. They let industry figure out the best solution. That's the approach that is taken in BC, and it has been much more effective than the approach that the Ontario government has been taking.

One of the best success stories in Ontario is probably the Beer Store, where they have a deposit return system on beer bottles. I think it's in the high 90s, the percentage of bottles that are reused. I think that's the one place Ontario has done well. We have a deposit return system on wine bottles that, as the member from Beaches—East York pointed out, is not working so well.

But I simply think that government's on the wrong approach. We can do a lot better for consumers and for the environment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I, too, waited around today to hear some of the informative speech and talk that I've heard today, like the member from Durham, because a lot is being said, and I think that's part of our right, and what people in my riding expect: that I am here to debate, especially when it's a bill that is maybe good-intentioned but, we think, in the wrong direction.

As I say, it's a great pleasure to rise with my views and get them on the record regarding the environment and our collective duty to responsibly preserve its beauty and the resources for future generations. I wish that any of these concepts were introduced in this bill we have before us, however, whose title really should be "the hide the eco tax act."

Ontarians have seen the costs of living in this province increase significantly over the past few years, to the point that companies and people are looking for work outside of this great province. In the last years, companies like Xstrata, Caterpillar, US Steel and many more have just left. It's a global market, and unfortunately for the province of Ontario, under this Liberal leadership, it's also a global labour market, and people can leave—thousands of jobs, and we see more happening all the time. We can no longer just add costs to business and industry without any thought or consideration for its impact. It's truly a sad situation.

This Liberal government has been leading this cause, creating unwieldy bureaucracies to administer policies that belong in the ministries and agencies that are accountable to this province. Waste Diversion Ontario is a glaring example. Under the Liberal watch, this unaccountable entity has grown into a juggernaut that could raise tire taxes by more than 2,000% without the government even as much as batting an eye.

Being afraid of accountability and being totally incompetent at keeping their house in order, the Liberals

are, of course, only happy to delegate the running of this province to whoever promises to keep the issue out of sight and out of mind.

Everyone remembers the last eco tax fiasco that the Liberal government quickly rescinded, blaming the unaccountable agency for the mistake. But truly, it's just all happening over again. Under this bill, the Liberals will make Waste Diversion Ontario even more powerful by giving it enforcement power and even greater fee-setting authority. They're feeding the monster we've called to scrap, and telling Ontarians they're implementing a PC idea. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In particular, the Ontario PC caucus has repeatedly called for the scrapping of eco fees that are nickel-and-diming Ontarians to death. Although the minister has made comments that appear to open the door to this, we can clearly see that the minister's real intent is to preserve these stealth taxes. They can accomplish this by shifting the point to where the consumers can no longer see the tax and do not know just how much it's affecting their purchases.

Today, eco fees show up on sales receipts and are in plain view. Under Bill 91, these will be included in the price that a consumer sees for the product in the store. This is not an improvement; it's just a shell game.

There's no difference in price between an eco fee at the point of sale and an eco fee that's hidden in the retail price. The consumer remains out of pocket. Bill 91, however, ensures that they won't even know it's the government's fault.

1640

Let's think of the unintended consequences. In my riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, the last eco fee fiasco, the tire tax, where off-road and agricultural tires saw increases of over 2,000%, just put our local dealers out of business. Farmers and local residents can simply go out of province to Quebec and avoid the taxes. So, a local tire dealer said, "Really, I'm going to have to move out of the province, three or four miles down the road, if I'm going to stay in business." That's the impact of this. It's just more costs that are making it harder and harder for people to do business and find good jobs in Ontario.

Adding insult to injury, the current version of this bill makes it optional for the new authority to disclose how the eco fee is calculated. In spite of throwing good money after bad and sweeping the consequences under the carpet, the government has shielded the new empowered and beefed-up authority from the freedom of information act and from oversight of the Auditor General, who will only be able to review the new authority if the minister himself feels it would be appropriate.

Again, we have agencies in this Parliament that could look into these, and now this is another agency that is being shielded from any investigation. So, we must ask why you would establish another agency without proper oversight. What are they afraid of, you know, another Ornge? Look at the examples, just the poor examples we've seen in the short time I've been here.

Ontarians have come to understand that when you scratch the surface of Liberal spin and buzzwords, you reveal massive waste and inefficiencies. This is what happened at eHealth, Omge and the power plants. Surely, considering the auditor's expertise, the Liberals would want to avoid a repeat of these scandals and let the auditor into the waste reduction agency as well.

Think of what the billions of dollars would do for this province. A billion dollars would construct 4,000 kilometres of road, enough to do a significant part of eastern Ontario, or enough for eight complete hospital expansions like we saw in Cornwall, in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. It would fund over 21,000 seniors in long-term-care beds for a year. These are big numbers. It would hire more than 15,000 new nurses for a year. These, as I say, are big. That's \$1 billion. But just think: This government has wasted multiple billions of dollars—\$5 billion or \$6 billion. In the Green Energy Act, we're looking at another \$1 billion per year for 20 years, and still no sign that they'll wake up and cancel that act.

Instead, what we will get under Bill 91 is a new bureaucracy that is just a recycled version of Waste Diversion Ontario, free to force others to give it money it can then waste on itself. Whichever additional fees it collects from businesses under the threat of fines will be passed on to the consumer, either in additional eco fees or increased prices for the same goods and services. This is a one-way ticket to misery, and the government is pressing on the gas pedal.

The Liberals intend to keep eco fees, blame an unaccountable authority for escalating them and ensure that consumers are none the wiser about being dinged by these bureaucrats. The Ontario PC caucus has presented a much better and straightforward plan for the management of waste that brings in the key industry players and treats recyclable products as a valuable resource rather than waste.

The task of coordinating the province's recycling strategy rests with the government, and its implementation rests on the key stakeholders involved in managing waste: producers and municipalities. At the end of the day, it isn't the Ministry of the Environment or a Waste Diversion Ontario employee who comes to the door to collect the blue box, and it isn't the minister digging the landfill and keeping seagulls away. Give those with a direct stake and direct knowledge of recycling a greater say in how we deliver the best recycling and waste management program in Ontario, and have the government set measurable and achievable recycling targets, establishing environmental standards and measuring outcomes.

As mentioned by our critic from Kitchener-Conestoga, the Minister of the Environment announced that he's repealing the current acts. But really, he's not repealing any of the recycling programs or agencies that are under it. So, it's strictly a shell game, something where they're talking about change but it's the same old problem where we see Ontario having the worst record for recycling in this country. It's a Liberal shell game that just shifts the

eco tax back onto the consumer, now with no accountability. You know, today the consumer knows what these taxes are and is aware of what a poor job this government is doing. Their answer to doing a better job is hiding their poor record.

You know, we all talk about some of the issues. We have no overall plan for waste diversion and elimination in this province. I was able to meet, at the county meeting we had last week—they had Ministry of the Environment people down there, and we talked about the creation of new landfills. The question was asked: How long was it to site and to license a new landfill? I don't know if anybody would guess here. We're talking—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Twenty years.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Their answer was 20 years. Somebody suggested a decade, and the representatives—no, you're talking decades.

What kind of plan would you—you push that type of cost back onto a municipality. I know that in South Glengarry, when we looked at a landfill site under this government, we took a consultant who had just finished a plan for another municipality. It took us 10 years and \$5 million to expand a waste site. There really should have been a prescriptive design of how to do this and how to move ahead. That's money that we could have put into roads, bridges, community centres or just back to the taxpayer. It provided nothing but administration, and a lot of consultant fees that built nothing.

I wish I had more time, Speaker. I know that other members are looking to talk, so I look forward to the comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to comment on some of the ideas that have been brought forward in this extended debate on this particular bill.

I think, though, that what the member did not connect, and something that we're incredibly interested in, is remembering that with the right policies, Ontario has the potential to become an environmental and economic leader in resource management. It's the economic impact of potentially strengthening this bill through the committee that we are incredibly interested in.

We've heard from many stakeholders across the province that they see that this bill, while not perfect—and they make some very good points: Why bring forward a piece of legislation that has some gaps in it? Why not do it right the first time? We share that frustration, believe me. But we are interested in actually creating the economic impact and having a positive impact through waste diversion.

Aside from the environmental benefits, which I think the member has outlined, the economic benefits are very clear. Every 1,000 tonnes of materials diverted generate 7.3 full-time equivalent jobs, \$711,000 in GDP and \$360,000 in wages. The economic benefits are four times greater than the net cost to recycle, so it makes a lot of sense to be proactive.

Jobs in waste diversion pay above the provincial average. These are considered good jobs, not the right-to-work jobs that we sometimes hear about: the right to work in less safe conditions, the right to work for less money, the right to work with less benefits.

We're not interested in those jobs; we're not interested in that conversation. We're interested in generating good jobs, strengthening the economy through a strong waste diversion act. We're committed to making it stronger in committee, and we look forward to that process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: It's a pleasure for me to rise this afternoon. I just want to remind members of the House that we've had 11-plus hours of debate already on this particular bill. It only requires 6.5 hours to get it to committee.

I think everything that needs to be said has been said. It would probably be a good idea if we could move this to committee so that we could hear from stakeholders and perhaps move some amendments, to move it forward.

I know that some people like to talk just to hear themselves talk. I'm not one of them, Mr. Speaker. I would recommend that we stop stalling, get this to committee and let's get to work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I was pleased to listen to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. I know he talked in a personal way about being mayor and the red tape involved. I recall, as many of you would, that back in municipal times, the government of the day was the NDP and they had what they called the IWA, the Interim Waste Authority. What a boondoggle that was. Well, this Bill 91 sounds similar in nature. In fact, if you look at the bill, there are seven parts to the bill.

I want to formally, on the record here today, under my comments on Bill 91, thank our critic Michael Harris and his staff Shane and Rebecca. They have deconstructed Bill 91, all seven sections, in such a way that the Minister of the Environment, I believe, is feeling rather unsettled about Bill 91 and where it is today.

Many leading industries have commented that it doesn't get the job done. Are you listening to Sony and to other stakeholders that want to make it work? What they want are fair rules.

1650

I think this came up in the remarks from the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. He said, "Set targets, and monitor the targets and enforcement." That's what's really required. The Ministry of the Environment simply isn't doing its job.

They went on to say—this is Michael Harris—"The Liberal government's Waste Reduction Act, which the environment minister tabled ... on June 6, continues every single one of the Liberals' eco-tax programs, including: the e-waste program, the tire-tax program and the Orange Drop Program" and household waste.

When you show up at the cash register today, you see the eco fee. Now they're hiding it in the price. Why are they hiding?

They're not changing one single thing by this legislation; they're just putting it all under wraps. It's simply not achieving the goals in ICI or any of the sectors.

Let's start from scratch. Work with our critic Michael Harris and his team. We'll get it right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: To preface my comments on the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, I've listened to several of the Liberal commentators, and they keep talking about how we've had 11 hours of debate. In fact, that is absolutely correct. They keep saying that we only have to have six and a half hours, and then we can send it to committee. That, too, is absolutely correct. What they are not saying, and what they need to say, is that at the end of the six and a half hours, it was the Liberal government itself which said they wanted to continue debate. Is anybody over there going to deny that you stood up and said you wanted to continue debate? If you stand up after six and a half hours saying you want more debate, then you should expect more debate. It's as simple as that.

On to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. I listened to what he had to say. It was a sane and rational debate. I don't agree with everything, but he made some good points. I think what he's trying to say is that this bill lacks some specifics. It lacks a monitoring and enforcement program. It lacks something to deal with the reduced packaging. It's all very vague about where the government is going with all of this. It's very vague on a Waste Reduction Authority.

I'm thinking back—and the member must be as frustrated as I am. Back in the early 1990s, when we went into this blue box proposal in a Liberal and then an NDP government, Ontario was at 25% waste reduction. Today, after 10 years of Liberal government and Leona Dombrowsky standing in this place saying they were going to aim for 60% waste reduction by the year 2008, we're at 23%. We've gone down 2%.

Ms. Catherine Fife: That's embarrassing.

Mr. Michael Prue: This is embarrassing, that Ontario has gone from first to last. We need to do something, but I think the member who just spoke is absolutely right, and we don't need any more lectures from a government that stands up there and asks for more debate, and then criticizes people who speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We return to the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'd like to thank the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, who talked about some gaps. I would just caution one thing: We shouldn't look at this as a way of generating new jobs, because, really, what we should be doing is trying to lower the cost to the consumer, so that they have more money to spend on other products. That will generate new jobs. You don't want to

just create jobs that make our process inefficient. But at least there's an idea here about generating jobs. You don't see that on the other side.

The member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and the move to committee—I guess I'm a little disappointed. We went through a committee process last week, and they stonewalled different thoughts that we had in committee on the wireless bill, with no intent of even listening to them, even though we had warnings from some of the companies that if we were to enact these laws in Ontario that cover the rest of the country—or the rest of North America, actually—whether you lived here or not, you would likely end up just moving their call centres. But, of course, that made no difference. They just stormed ahead with it anyway. But those are jobs that we need in this province. We've just seen total disregard for them.

As well, when we talk about the member from Durham and the red tape, I think we have to listen to these companies. They're the people who generate—we should encourage them not to generate as much waste. The best way of handling waste is not to create it in the first place.

Again, the member from Beaches—East York—could he be more true about listening to the other side and getting doublespeak? They talk about not wanting to debate the issue, but they had the right to stop it after six and a half. They chose, of course, to listen to some good ideas on this side. I don't blame them, but I wouldn't complain about it in the end.

We have to look at this government that has taken our waste diversion from 25%—and, of course, another target missed: 60%. It's not bad. I understand it's more like between 12% and 17%, which is gross mismanagement of the file. We think we need some changes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnett): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It's a pleasure to rise to speak on Bill 91, An Act to establish a new regime for the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002.

I, for one, believe—a couple of key points here. This is a fairly important bill, and I know that a lot of members have been saying, "Let's get it to committee really quickly and we'll hear all the comments," but I'll tell you, we do need to debate. Once the bill has passed and once we've debated, then we're going to hear about the regulations later. That's what scares me: when we pass legislation in this House and know nothing about the regulations, and over and over again we find out that something is done by a group of people behind the scenes and we hear nothing about it until someone gets it at the cash register. They find out, in a lot of cases, whether it's an eco fee or whatever it may be, that the taxes are on, and it does impact the economy and a person's ability to purchase.

A couple of things that have been said here for sure—20 years for a landfill. I think the member mentioned that just a minute ago. That's exactly what it is. And the big thing: Nobody wants a new landfill. They're simply not

popular, no matter where they're put. People fight them tooth and nail. Usually, they leak. The engineers and the hydrologists will say, "There will be no problem," but in the end, the liners do leak and there's that impact on water quality, so we always have to have that in the back of our minds. But at the same time, we continue to produce garbage that goes into our landfills.

I want to say a couple of things. There are some shining examples in our corporate world. Someone mentioned a little earlier about the Beer Store. The Beer Store has been great. I think it's around 97%. Even the recycling we get out of our newspaper industry is the same. It's up at 93%, 94%, 95%. They do a great job. Honda Canada: I think the plant in Alliston, if I'm not mistaken, is almost 100% recyclable, what goes out of there. They recycle everything. So we can do it. If you leave it up to the corporate world and they want to set an example, they can do it.

I can tell you that if you walk around the roads, walk around the intersections and see what people toss out the windows of their cars—water bottles, coffee cups and fast food garbage all over the place, every spring in particular. I personally walk every day. I walk about six or seven kilometres, and my wife and I keep about seven kilometres of road clear of garbage. We take it back and try to recycle what we can. If more people did that, it would at least get rid of the junk on the side of the road, which I absolutely hate. I don't think I've ever thrown a coffee cup or anything out of any vehicle in my life, so I really, truly believe in this.

I want to talk for a moment—we don't have a lot of time—about a young lady in my riding. Her name is Kelly Clune. Kelly sits on all the waste management committees in the city of Orillia and is passionate about working on any plan that will improve recycling in the province of Ontario. I want to tell you a little bit about a couple of projects. My federal member, Bruce Stanton, and I hold a couple of big summer events in our riding. One is a barbecue at the Coldwater curling club. Members are all welcome to come any year to my barbecue. It's always a great time. And we have a shore lunch later on in the summer, where we have a fish dinner up on the shores of Georgian Bay. This is the first year we did this, this past year, and I'd ask anybody to do the same thing. We tried to go to a zero-waste event. At this particular event, I had Kelly Clune come in. Her company is called Kelly Clean. For \$350 for each event, she looked after handling the waste.

1700

Now, here's what's important about it: She made sure that every container we had there for every product was recyclable; it could go to some part of recycling. The one event, the Coldwater event, had about 700 people at it, and the shore lunch in Midland had about 800; so we had about 1,500 people at this event. The only things we couldn't recycle were those little things that butter comes in, those little containers; that's the only thing that didn't go into the recycling. Even the knives and forks—we had wooden ones. They're a little bit extra money; we used

those. All of the pop cans, any water bottles, anything we had at all was recyclable. In the end, Mr. Cycle—
Laughter.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Mr. Cycle, yes.

Mr. Speaker, in the end we had photographs in each event of all of the water bottles and the plates and all that kind of food, the food etc., that we actually collected. There were bags and bags and bags of things, but all of those bags were actually going to be recycled. All we had—I'm so proud of this—was something like not even a six-quart basket from each event, like half of a six-quarter basket, that would be what we had to send to the landfill.

We took pictures of that. We did media events. We actually sent it to a group in Simcoe county called Zero Waste. They sent us back letters of congratulation. This is what they want to do; they want to do more of this kind of thing. We can educate the public to actually do that, and we can educate industry as well, but it takes time and it takes a little bit of an effort, and a little bit of cost in this case. But in the end, any other year that might have produced 10 bags of garbage to the landfill; this year, it did not do that. We're going to continue on that plan with any events we have in the future. It's a good example not only for ourselves but for other politicians in our community, in Simcoe county and, hopefully, in other parts of the province.

I have all the data if anybody wanted to follow up on that; I could show them what we did and how Kelly handled those two events. She did it with the help of the county of Simcoe. The county of Simcoe has gone through quite a bit of problems with the site 41 project. It was definitely in the wrong spot and we had to change that. The county came back and they've done massive recycling since that particular project was cancelled.

So when everybody works together—each level of government, industry and, of course, people personally, individuals—then you can do better. I know as a fact that the kids know a lot more about recycling than we do. The kids will tell you, if you go into a grade 4 or grade 5 class where the teachers have done a really good job on that, all about the coating they use on all the kinds of water bottles etc., and the kinds of glasses you can use. It does pay. I can tell you, from my perspective, I think that it's really important that we continue a strong campaign on recycling and get around to having as many of the young people recycle as possible.

I did want to pay tribute to Kelly today. I mean, she and I have had some battles over the years as far as what should be recycled and what shouldn't be, and what legislation we should put in place, but in the end we do know one thing for sure: that everyone has a responsibility. Whether it's industry, whether it's government, whether it's the individual, we all have to do a better job, because in the end nobody wants these landfills.

I also think that just adding taxes on in the form of eco fees is not a good sign, because what happens is that people will go and they'll find the product cheaper in another jurisdiction. Then that company loses out on the

sale of that particular product. Keeping the cost down is part of the overall plan or project that should follow any of these types of legislation.

I look forward to more debate on this bill, but I also look forward to hearing what people are going to say when they actually come to committee and what kind of amendments they would make to the bill. I mean, my impression—and what I've been told in the Legislature here—is that it's kind of a rehash or a review of the whole recycling industry. I think whatever happens on this as far as legislation, as far as regulations, we actually really have to get this right—because as I said earlier, when we bring out legislation like this, it's easy to sit in the committee and make amendments and pass them. But then again, the devil is usually in the regulations: What is the detail there and how does that impact people down the road? Whether it's job creation or not, I don't know, but in the end, I think it's really important that any legislation is affordable to the public, and educates the public as well. I think education is the key to everything around recycling, and, finally, making people commit to it, like not throwing garbage out the windows of their cars. That's a disgrace. There must be a pile of people doing that, because there's a pile of garbage along the sides of the roads right across our province. That is part of the thing that disturbs me and why I think we need better education on actually stopping that in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Simcoe North. I commend him for bringing in a new practice, if you will, that reduces waste. If he's hosting an event, then he's actually demonstrating leadership. That's great.

It made me think of when I was a trustee on the Waterloo Region District School Board. We brought in a ban. Bans are not very popular because they're called "bans," but we tried to reduce our expenditures on single-use plastic bottles of water. In fact, I was shocked at the time—this was back in 2007-08. We were spending almost \$28,000, as a school board, on buying plastic bottles of water. As a board, we challenged that practice, and I think that actually it's incumbent upon all of us to champion that. In fact, even though the board reversed or backed off a little bit, schools like WCI, a local high school, championed the cause.

I think the member from Simcoe North alluded to this: that there's a whole generation coming up behind us that knows better than all of us.

I'm pleased to recognize Victoria Wang, who is here from WCI today. She's a co-op student from the school; she's working in my office. WCI is doing an amazing job on the environmental file. Thank goodness, because it should be encouraging for us as leaders who stand here.

I think the member from Simcoe North, though, ignores a very big thing, and that's the politics of Bill 91. Waste-related issues are very difficult to get on the political radar. If it was easy or if it was a priority, it would have happened 10 years ago—because we are 25 years behind

the rest of the country. I think, though, doing nothing in this instance is really not an option, which is why we're committed to making a full review of the legislation at the committee. We look forward to being part of that conversation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: The member from Beaches—East York always repeats that after six and a half hours we agreed to continue the debate. He knows the rules, so he's just spinning the fact that we could vote after six and a half hours—and we cannot. He knows the rules.

I'll say that I commend my colleague for everything that he has been doing to keep Ontario clean. I know that in my own riding we have these cleanup days every spring and a lot of people are cleaning up, and I thank them for that.

But like we've heard time and again today, to leave this very important matter of recycling and all of this to the private sector is not the answer, because I told you before—I'm going to repeat it—when I changed tires on my car, I paid extra and it was supposed to be a disposal fee. And when I heard that everything was going to the dump instead of recycling it or paying a company to do something else with the tires—they were going to the landfill—it's not the answer. We have to be very strict about it, and I'll ask everyone to support Bill 91.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

1710

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's a pleasure to rise to hear the member from Simcoe North, and I don't want to claim that I stayed here for the period of the afternoon to listen only to that. There was a lot of good debate, and I stayed to listen to all of it. But I think he had a good example of what can be done. I think that's what we're lacking here: a plan that encourages people to plan to look after garbage.

In my riding, the Williamstown Fair board—which I was very proud to be a director of for about a dozen years—decided to, instead of using plastic glasses in the beer garden, they actually moved over to cans, and handed the cans out because they could be recycled. It saved the plastic glasses, it saved a lot of garbage, which was a problem each year. In turn, one of the charities actually collects the cans and collects half the refund, as part of the deal. I think that that goes with the people who are running that.

Just as I'm mentioning the Williamstown Fair, which is Canada's oldest fair, we had the president, Rick Marvell, celebrate his 70th birthday this weekend. Actually, his birthday is today, so they gathered quite a crowd and, for the things he has done in the community, I think it's well deserved.

Another example: I worked with Bell Canada in one of its largest office buildings here in Toronto. They went through a waste management program where they reduced the garbage from over 1,000 employees, I would

say, down to just a few garbage bags a week. But it took a lot of work; it took a lot of planning. It just goes to show that if you give industries some input into what their costs will be if they don't recycle, they will make changes and they will do things that will save them money because they have to add it to the bottom line. But if you take that ability out, and just legislate costs back towards them because the industry does—whether they are creating the waste or not—I think that that's a sign that doesn't allow the ingenuity that Ontarians have and a lot of these big companies have as a whole.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to what the member from Simcoe had to say, and I commend him for his picnic, for the environmental effect that his community and his neighbourhood had, and for people of good faith everywhere in this province doing everything they can to reduce or to recycle. That's absolutely important.

I cannot help but stand up here after having listened to the Minister of Community Safety and what she had to say to this House. It is very clear on the face of the rules of procedure of this House that when a bill is being debated, after six and a half hours there are only two consequences that can take place: Either the government chooses, through a member of its cabinet, to call the vote or it chooses to extend the debate. The fact that we are here after six and a half hours is because a member of the cabinet of the government stood in their place and said, "We choose to extend the debate."

I don't know how I can be accused of mischief. I don't know how I can be accused of spinning that fact. That is exactly what happened in this House. I don't know how a member of the government and a cabinet minister can deny that reality. It is there on the face of Hansard. Either she or one of her colleagues would have had to have stood up and said exactly that.

I think that this minister owes an apology, not only to me, but to this House, for making a statement as spurious as the one that was just made.

I thank the member from Simcoe for what he had to say, and I think the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services should go back and look at her own rule book before she spouts such nonsense.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Simcoe North, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I thank the member from Kitchener—Waterloo, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services—I didn't really find it that bad—the member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry and the member from Beaches—East York for their comments.

I want to welcome Victoria to Queen's Park. I understand at your school you do a lot of great work in recycling. That's exactly what I was getting at earlier when I talked about how young people seem to have a better grasp of this. It's almost like the BlackBerrys and

the way they grab on to the Internet etc. They seem to be so much more skilled in just learning this.

I applaud the education system for making sure that our young people are learning this. I think we can learn a lot from the young people, because they seem to know all the codes of the recycled materials.

I thank you for some of the comments on that particular project we did. From now on, in our riding, that's the way it will be with any of the federal or provincial events. We just want to make sure that we have an as-close-as-possible-to-zero-waste event.

I give the credit to my friend Kelly Clune from Orillia, who has been passionate about keeping material out of the landfills. She says that we can do a lot better and I agree 100% with her. Whether this bill will allow us to do better, I'm not sure in the long run, but I know that with good education and a lot of thought, and with our young people actually educating our more senior citizens, we can do a lot better of a job.

Again, I want to go back to my days as the warden of the county of Simcoe. The idea of landfills—they are the responsibility of the regional level of government. I tell you, it is a problem and we need to do everything we can not to have to build new landfills in our province. The way around that is waste diversion and recycling.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Bill Walker: Before I start, I'd just like to commend our critic Michael Harris from Kitchener-Conestoga and his staff, Shane and Rebecca. Our job in opposition is to look at every piece of legislation proposed to this House and truly go through it with a clear eye: Is this going to be in the best interests of Ontario taxpayers? Is this going to benefit our province? Is this going to make our province a better place, both for our generation and, most importantly, that generation sitting in front of you, Mr. Speaker? I applaud them. They've done a lot of great work.

I take a look at this bill's name, even—An Act to establish a new regime for the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002. The word “regime” scares me, because they've got more regimes over there, more administration and more bureaucracy—

Interjection: Thirty-seven panels.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thirty-seven panels, you're correct.

Interjection: And growing.

Mr. Bill Walker: And growing.

My other colleague, Mr. Miller from Parry Sound-Muskoka, started off his remarks, and I found it very interesting that back in 2005 he actually had a private member's bill called the product stewardship act. It's interesting, because I think the fundamental difference is—what we're saying and our policy, even today, is very similar to Mr. Miller's, proposed back in 2005, is that we should be setting, as government, the guidelines. We should be making sure that we understand what products we want to have recycled and put some thought around that. We need to set targets and then we actually should

have the ability to enforce and then get out of the way and let private industry do their job and do it to the best of their ability.

Stakeholders have come to me and they have concerns. I think what Mr. Miller was trying to say in his bill and where we stand, versus the government of today, the Liberal government, is that we need to ensure that the people who are most impacted, those producers who are paying the freight—and they do pay the freight totally for the program, yet they have almost no ability to have any input into how that program is administered, how it's managed or how it's done in a municipality. But they pay the freight.

Just think if it was your business and you could lower the cost by doing things effectively and cost-efficiently so there's more money in your coffers to be able to go out and buy things, which, again, I believe my colleague from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry suggested. If people have more money to spend, they're out buying consumable products and then there is actually more money and more jobs that are coming to the economy.

These companies are no different. They want to be able to have a say. They're quite fine, as they're telling me, to pay the freight, but they need to have a say in how that freight gets done and how they administer the programs. We have a fundamental concern with this bill from that perspective.

Before I go too far, I also want to put a shout out to the municipality of Meaford in my great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. They've recently won a recycling award and are leaders across the country. I applaud them and I hope others will go onto their website, take a look at the ways they're doing things and make sure that they try to implement them, similar to what my colleague from Simcoe North has done personally with the programs that he runs, where there's almost zero waste going to the dump.

We heard in here, earlier today, that when the Liberals took power, 19% of products were being recycled, and that has actually dropped to 12%. This is an alarming trend that they've had 10 years, supposedly, to improve. They created another level of bureaucracy. They created a group at arm's length so that they could take all the glory and kind of make this group take the heat if there were bad-news stories coming. It sounds a bit like a LHIN to me, if you really think about it. They set this group up and put them off to the side, and they come out with the good-news announcements, but whenever it's one of their bad decisions they throw that back to the LHIN, and then we just go around and around the loop here.

1720

It's interesting because it sounds a bit like the deficit. When they took office, I believe it was about a \$129-billion debt, and we're going to be up to \$240 billion or \$260 billion by the end of their next term, although today we heard in the House that they're overachieving—if you can believe that—on their finances.

And it sounds like hydro rates. Again, we were the leader. Ontario was the leader of Confederation and had the lowest rates across the country. Now, we have the highest rates in North America, and there's going to be another increase coming to the businesses that we're talking about. No wonder we have—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. I'd ask the House to come to order so I can hear the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, please. The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I'll maybe just repeat that because there was a lot of noise going on over there, and I want to make sure that Hansard can hear that. It's appalling that they're actually overachieving and think they're overachieving with the financial record and the mess they've created in this province of Ontario. They've doubled the debt. They've got a deficit—\$10 billion this year, and what they left out of their remarks this morning is—the Premier was quite proud that they're hitting their targets and overachieving, but I think if you read their budget, that deficit is going to balloon back up to \$14 billion next year from \$10 billion this year. Well, that's going in the wrong direction if you're an achiever in my world.

I'm going to repeat about these hydro rates as well because, at the end of the day, we were the leaders. We had the lowest rates. We had a booming economy. We had people wanting to move to Ontario. We had businesses wanting to expand in Ontario. Now, we have 300,000 manufacturing jobs that have left the province. We've got energy rates that have doubled and are continuing to escalate, and we're driving more and more and more people out.

In this bill, they may have had a grandiose purpose, but the other thing that they've really done here is they've left the administration and bureaucracy in place. In fact, they're purporting to give them more powers, which scares me to death, when you give these bureaucrats more power to be able to set rates. It's just a hidden stealth tax, what they're trying to do. I believe my colleague from Durham stated the "stealth tax," and that's exactly what it is. Right now, you can read on that package of batteries, as he referenced, that \$2, if that's the number, goes now to recycling. Now, they're going to bury it in there, and there's nothing that stops Liberals—if you think about it, "I will not raise taxes"—from going from \$2 to \$5 or \$7.

If you need evidence of that, we just have to go back a few months ago when they implemented a supposed recycling program, the Ontario Tire Stewardship program. If numbers come to my mind, it was a 2,000% increase to the very farmers that we were talking about today with that Ontario food act that they're trying to save the world with. But a 2,000% increase I don't think is ever going to help any of our industry or agricultural community.

What they've done is they've actually given more power to a bureaucracy rather than them taking responsibility. With all due respect to Minister Bradley, that is

the minister's job. It's the minister's job to set guidelines, it's the minister's job to make sure that we have targets and it's the minister's job to enforce them. Don't delegate to yet another bureaucratic nightmare like the LHINs, like Ornge. We've seen what has happened there. We delegated and look what happened with the gas plants: \$1.1 billion of waste because they didn't make the proper decision. In this case, I have fears that the same thing may happen.

Environment Minister Jim Bradley claimed at a news conference on June 6 that Bill 91 would repeal our act, the PC act, as well as scrap Liberal-created eco taxes and recycling cartels, including Ontario Tire Stewardship and Ontario Electronic Stewardship. This statement is beyond disingenuous, with all due respect. Although Bill 91 would technically repeal the Waste Diversion Act, it continues—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw the unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Bill Walker: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Waste Diversion Act actually continues every single recycling program, every agency and every fee created under it in a section entitled "Existing Waste Diversion Programs and Existing Industry Funding Organizations." Bill 91 does, however, give the Minister of the Environment the ability to wind down these programs and organizations through regulation, if he chooses to. I've never seen the Liberals yet repeal a tax that they've implemented, so I have no great comfort and I believe the public has no great comfort that they will follow through. Even if they did, even if they really made that over-achieving jump of faith, it would take years and years and we would be way behind.

This Waste Reduction Act is a Liberal shell game that shifts eco taxes from consumers' receipts to price tags on store shelves. It's not going to do anything to help the consumers anymore. In fact, it's going to increase costs, and most of the people in my riding can't take many more increases. If you again talk about the tire stewardship fees that were 2,000%, if you talk about their hydro bills doubling over the last eight years under this government and another increase coming at us very shortly, there are people who are afraid to turn—we're starting to get into the fall and winter months of our climate. People are already starting to come to me saying, "I can't afford it." The United Way is already telling me that they're getting calls that they're not going to be able to handle this year for people, because those hydro rates are so high because of the poor decisions of this government.

They try to use things like the environment and recycling, and they try to spin with fancy titles, and I'll give them their due: Sometimes they've got some pretty catchy titles, and people are being hoodwinked a little bit. But at the end of the day, we have to get back to facts. We have to ensure that the programs we're doing—I believe my colleague from Simcoe North said it well: The devil is in the details of the regulations that will follow. This bill, they'll make it sound nice—"everything is good and rosy; the world is wonderful, and we're

going to save the planet because of this new act"—but at the end of the day the regulations will be, no doubt, more taxation and more cost to the consumer, which will yet again detract from or actually take away more jobs from our great province. We've got 600,000 people now unemployed; we can't afford any more.

We have to ensure that we get there. We've got the worst recycling record in Canada. I believe we can be the best. Let's give it back to industry. We can regulate it. We can monitor it. Let them run the program and get out of the way, like most other provinces—like BC—do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a privilege and a lot of fun following my friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I can always count on him as far as where his beliefs are and where his thoughts are. Some of them we can agree on, but definitely there are some we don't agree on.

I want to also commend the member from Simcoe North. I was very appreciative of what I hear he and his wife do in their spare time, going out with those walks. It's nice to see other members having that opportunity to not only make a difference within their community but to find the time to spend some good quality family time. Whatever time you do get to spend with your family, it is always quality time.

I agree with my friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound in regard to waste management, in regard to the context of developing the proper legislation, standards and guidelines. We need to know that up front, before we implement any of these changes, because if we don't do those—if we don't take those appropriate steps, and if we don't do like we're doing right now, having those discussions in regard to implementing those regulations—those responsibilities, that role and the cost that is going to come out of there are certainly going to fall on municipalities, and us as taxpayers.

Now, my friend really lost me when he started talking about hydro, where he actually had indicated that the government—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Mantha: No, wait a second. I agree with the fact that this government has not been making appropriate decisions in regard to hydro rates, but, in all due fairness, neither has the Conservative government over the course of the years with the privatization that they have done. You have to agree with me on that one. The conglomerate of the 15 privatization companies over there—it's a bureaucracy in itself.

I loved your analogy when you talked about the local LHINs—which is exactly that; it's developing bureaucracy—but, in essence, what you enacted when the Conservative government was in power was exactly that, another bureaucracy that has actually raised the hydro costs across this province. The Liberals raise taxes and have developed committees and others, but the Conservatives have always looked towards privatization, and that's not always the answer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I appreciate the comment from the member from East York a few moments ago, but I would like to take this opportunity to share with the member that standing order 47 allows the government House leader, or a minister of the crown acting in his or her place, to adjourn debate after we've reached 6.5 hours. The key word here is "adjourn." It does not end debate. It adjourns, it suspends, it postpones debate, to be called at another date.

Again, after 6.5 hours, debate would be adjourned, just like it is adjourned at 6 o'clock on a weeknight. Now, we also get the opportunity at 6.5 hours of debate to move a motion with notice providing for the allocation of time to debate on the bill. Two hours of debate apportioned equally among the three parties is allotted to debate on the time allocation motion, at the end of which time the Speaker will, without further debate or amendment, put the question. Time allocation requires the majority of votes to carry, which we do not have in a minority government situation, unless you want to vote for that. That is why the government said yes to continue the debate when we reached 6.5 hours, because we have no mechanism to end the debate unilaterally.

1730

We have debated Bill 91. Why don't we bring it to committee and have all these amendments?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I've been confounded here because of the minister of the Wynne government standing and feigning an attempt at time allocation, when, in fact, they're working with a coalition government now. We have a clear coalition, for the people of Ontario, between the NDP and the Liberals. We understand that. The only party standing up for the people of Ontario is Tim Hudak and my colleagues in the PC caucus.

But sticking to the bill: What they want to do—to the viewers: They're trying to stifle your members from speaking. We have members on this side who have not had the chance to speak on an important environmental issue which they have simply got wrong. This Bill 91 is a disguise. I'm going to just briefly—it's seven sections, and I'll give you one word for each one.

Part I is a general definition. Part II is setting up a brand new bureaucracy; it's the Waste Reduction Authority. It's just a name change, nothing else, in terms of—there's one today. It's called Waste Diversion Ontario. A name change; they all get severance pay and go on to do nothing, like they've done for the last 10 years. The responsibility for product in part III is producer responsibility. This is what we're advocating today. That's our plan. Take it and run with it. Part IV is integrated prices. This is hiding the price in the product so you and I won't know what the battery costs, what the chlorine costs. Whatever it is, you're going to pay more, and they have told us that. Part V deals with enforcement, which we think is legitimate. We felt from the very beginning that

you should set targets, monitor them and then enforce them. This government simply doesn't enforce them.

We have a huge issue in my riding. The Drive Clean program—the Auditor General said that it's a failed program. It's a failed program. They won't enforce it. This past week, I had some constituents on a transformer station on the top of the Oak Ridges moraine. Professors from Guelph university said that they had not done proper discipline on it. This government is not performing its duties.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I ran downstairs to get a copy of the Ontario Hansard from the 22nd of October, 2013, which I would like to read into the record.

The Acting Speaker, Mrs. Julia Munro, stated: "Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and one half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

"Acting government House leader."

The Honourable Jeff Leal gets on his feet and states the following: "Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. You're doing a great job this morning. On behalf of the Minister of the Environment, Mr. Bradley, and his wonderful bill, Bill 91, I would certainly like debate to continue."

Mr. Speaker, the government stands there and explains all kinds of stuff. The government has options. The government could invoke closure if the government wanted to try to invoke closure. They have done so even in a minority Parliament situation. They have done so with the concurrence of the Conservatives. They have done so after discussions with the House leaders. They have many tools available to them. But the tool that they chose on that occasion, through Mr. Leal, was to continue debate. That is what they chose, and no spinning by this minister or this government can get around it.

The House rules are absolutely clear. I would remind the minister that when her colleague stands up there and states, "On behalf of the Minister of the Environment, Mr. Bradley, and his wonderful bill, Bill 91, I would certainly like debate to continue," they cannot turn around thereafter and say they don't want it to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank my colleague from Algoma-Manitowlin. We always, I think, see more eye to eye than we disagree. I'm willing to continue to work with you on those ones that we can't agree on. I think you're salvageable, and I'll keep working with you, sir.

The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services—you know, I'm going to let her and her colleague from the coalition continue to debate all they want. I'm not going to get into that one. I do think it's unfortunate that people will play that game in this House

and say, "We don't want a debate, we do want a debate," and then try to make us look bad when we're trying to do what we're sent here to do, and that is to stand and represent the wishes and the concerns of our constituents. That's our job. I will always do that, and I'll never apologize for doing that.

My esteemed colleague from Durham said it well. He brought up, again, that NDP-Liberal coalition. If there hadn't been that prop-up vote at budget time, we probably wouldn't be having any of these discussions because, hopefully, there would have been a change in government, and we could have saved those kids in front of you a lot of duress and concern over their lives.

I think what he brought up was a really good thing. We should be debating about the environment and things that are going to help our environment and ensure we have a safe and sustainable environment. He talked about hiding the price that the consumer pays. That's one of the big things in this bill that I'm afraid of. It's one more way for the Liberals to do what they do extremely well.

Interjection: Secret tax.

Mr. Bill Walker: That's secret tax, stealth tax: "We will not raise your taxes. There will not be a health tax. There will not be stewardship fees on your tractor tires." Mr. Speaker, it goes on and on and on. The public is catching on to this.

We need to get out of the way of people being able to do their jobs. The government's job is not to do every single job in the world. That's not our philosophy. It's not what the people of Ontario—they want the most cost-effective, efficient, best service possible. We need to ensure that, as government, we set the standard, we set the guidelines, we set the targets and we have the ability to enforce. When there's a case where there is private industry, which, by the way, keeps our economy going, those small businesses that everyone's proud to talk about—85% to 95% of our small businesses drive this economy. We need them to be driving it in this case as well. Get out of their way, and let them truly make it cost-effective.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for further debate, I want to indicate to the House that I've allowed some latitude this afternoon because I thought it was appropriate to do so, but I think it's also necessary for me to point out a couple of things.

When we're debating Bill 91, I would ask members to confine their comments to the bill. I would also remind them that questions and comments are to relate back to the member who has just spoken, who has just given us their presentation, not previous rounds of debate. And third, the members should address their comments through the Chair, not to the cameras.

Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to address my remarks to the Chair and to talk a little bit about this proposed legislation, the Waste Reduction Act.

My present critic role is consumer services, but I was the opposition's environment critic at the time this government introduced eco taxes back in 2008.

We know the goal of Bill 91 and, like legislation before, of course, it's to reduce waste. It's something we, in this House, all agree about in principle. We're in favour of the concept, obviously. What we've heard during discussions even this afternoon—obviously the devil's in the details, but we really question how this will be implemented, who's going to pay for it and how much it's going to cost.

This new waste reduction strategy—and this government has been talking about it for over 10 years now, Speaker—does identify some challenges—four challenges specifically: waste diversion has stalled under the current act; lost opportunities to attract investment, to create new jobs, to foster innovation and conserve resources—none of that that is really occurring. The third major issue is the dwindling of our municipal landfills and the rising costs for those municipalities for the various diversion programs.

It's been 10 years now that we've been discussing this and, apart from making progress—in fact, in many ways, especially if you look at some of the targets that were set 10 years ago, we're going backwards as far as diversion.

The province of Ontario, at the present time, generates 12 million tonnes. That's enough garbage to fill the Rogers Centre—I'm sure this has been said before—every year. Only 25% of that waste is diverted. Actually, it might be 24% or it might be closer to 23%.

1740

One of the main planks of the current recycling system, curbside blue boxes were introduced under the last government in 2002. That's been a success. Although it was a success, the overall diversion rate has only gotten worse.

In 2008, the Ministry of the Environment put out a discussion paper talking about amendments and a new direction. I'll just quote:

“Over the past few years much progress has been made on waste diversion in Ontario. Programs initiated and developed under the Waste Diversion Act are changing the way we approach waste diversion. These initiatives have incorporated, to varying extent, principles associated with extended producer responsibility, which hold that producers should be responsible for the costs associated with the environmental impact of their products. Much more needs to be done. Stakeholders have identified a number of challenges,” this document goes on to say, “associated with the existing waste diversion framework, the programs that have been approved, and the act itself. Many feel that it is time to reflect on the approaches Ontario has taken, consider how best to undertake future waste diversion initiatives, and define what kind of a future we should drive toward, as a society.”

That was written back in 2008. Here we are, five years in. At the time, the goal was to move to a zero-waste strategy, and the move to zero waste was based, again, in researching these documents, on four building blocks:

“(1) A clear framework built upon the foundation of extended producer responsibility.

“(2) A greater focus on the first and second of the 3Rs—waste reduction, and reuse.

“(3) Increasing reduction and diversion of waste from the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors,” the ICI sector.

“(4) Greater clarity around roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities, to ensure that all players are contributing to a common goal.”

So, Speaker, here we are five years later, and things have gotten worse. The current waste reduction strategy for this bill admits, “We are still lagging behind other jurisdictions when it comes to reducing, reusing and recycling our waste,” this despite seeing the tax increases, the eco fees on a multitude of products and the move to have consumers pay for the end-of-life recycling of products. I think we have one of those “I told you so” moments.

The backgrounder then talked about surprise eco fees. We talked about sneaky eco fees. Whether they're surprise or sneaky, they both allude to a consumer not expecting that extra surcharge in addition to the transaction fee. I'd get people dropping into my office back then. They had just been charged what became a very significant fee from Leon's across the street or the Brick located down the street.

There's also an admission that recycling has been stalled at only 23% for 10 years. Again, we talked about the program not working five years ago. We'll say it again: Waste diversion and landfill management has not been successful under this present government.

I don't know whether people here would recall—there will be some Liberal members that may recall very early in this government, April 5, 2004, when then-environment minister Leona Dombrowsky announced her 60% waste diversion/reduction from landfills. She made the announcement in this House that there would be a 60% reduction in waste, and that was to be fulfilled the following year, in 2005. Now, she did later amend the target to 2008. What happened to that 60% reduction target? What happened to that promise to reduce waste by 60% made by this government 10 years ago? What's the waste reduction rate today, 10 years later? It's certainly not 60%. It's something like 23%. Did Ms. Dombrowsky know that at the time, that the waste reduction rate in 10 years was actually going to be worse, that it was going to be down to 23%, in spite of her commitment in this House to divert 60% of waste from landfill?

What did we get in the last 10 years? Well, we know about the eco fees; we know about the taxes—bad for the customer, bad for business and, essentially, it's bad for the environment. I really regret that those eco fees were snuck in under the cloak of environmentalism. That's an approach that obviously backfired. It affects all of us, those of us who are concerned about the environment, and it really had a very negative effect on the integrity of words like “stewardship,” “environmentalism” and “green.”

If that eco fee debacle didn't put “green” in a bad light, certainly the hundreds of industrial wind turbines

that are cropping up across rural Ontario are pretty well the final nail in that coffin. We're seeing a move away from eco fees now, to a structure where recycling costs—if I read this correctly—will initially be picked up by the manufacturer or the importer. We'll see how that works out.

I'll use, maybe, a better example: the tire stewardship program. There have been some hiccups with that program. I do talk to people in the industry; by and large, they're doing their best to try and make this work. The Used Tires Program goes back to 2009, as operated by the Ontario Tire Stewardship—so there have been some successes there. Certainly, we don't see the stockpiles of tires sitting in warehouses that we did a number of years ago, but then they kind of had to mess that up with these very large fees for off-road equipment and farm equipment—the horrendous tax increases on combine tires, for example.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I listened to the member, and it sounds like he wants to have waste diversion. He did talk about how this government has done a bad job since they've been governing, and they certainly didn't meet their targets.

Having this bill here, though—there is something in there that is worth bringing up. There's a section in there on the consideration of bans. Bans can be a good thing. In Nova Scotia and in BC, they had bans in place. There are provinces out there you can maybe use as a guide to see, if you do put a ban in, how to make sure that ban will help, for instance, innovation. When you ban something, people have to come up with different ideas on how to dispose of that sort of material.

Perhaps also making sure that, when people take their waste to the landfills, it's charged appropriately so then that forces them—if the cost is reflective of what the cost is for a landfill, then perhaps they should be looking at other ways to divert their waste. It forces people to think outside of the box and come up with ideas and new ways of disposing waste.

I'm not going to mention the member's riding, because I don't think that would be appropriate—but there are members in the opposition party who sometimes throw a comment out there and rile everyone up, and then they just run out. You know those kids in class—what were they called?—the “something”-disturbers. I can't remember the first word, but you know those kids. Then they'd run out the door, and everybody would be riled up. Before you make those comments, please, let's have an effective debate about waste diversion, and skip that. Try it; you might like it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member opposite for his comments, although I must say it seems to be a bit contrary to the position that his leader has taken in terms of clearing the decks and letting the Legislature get on

with the work. We've had 12 hours of debate on Bill 91; 47 members of the Legislature have spoken to this bill. I guess on this side, we're wondering why we're not moving forward with a piece of legislation that we believe would create some jobs and is a good piece of legislation we need to get in place.

1750

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'm proud to rise to comment on the words of the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. I understand, from previous talk, that this government had the chance to limit debate, but they chose not to. So I'm somewhat surprised by the comments. Saying that, I look at some of the comments he talked about, the amount of waste, and I think really that's what we think this bill should be: something that actually attacks the amount of waste that we're seeing, not just another way of charging people to get rid of it.

In my own riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, I actually met with somebody that was trying to get more recycled tires. There was scarcity and he couldn't get a hold of them, or at least he couldn't get them back from the group that looks after these tires now. I think that there's a market out there; there's a chance for people to actually make money out of it and not charge consumers for it.

It's interesting, we talk about—this is 10 years of Liberal government here, and Minister Dombrowsky with a 60% diversion target the next year. We see promises—but we never saw anything on that again.

It's just typical of how the government gets out there with big, flashy headlines. We heard just a few weeks ago how the government was going to save us hundreds of millions of dollars by paying windmill operators not to produce power. But we've already paid them hundreds of millions of dollars to build the darn things, and now we're going to save money by paying them not to produce power because we've got a surplus. I guess, like through the gas plants, they saved us money by delaying them—\$1.6 billion, but then we turned around and we've got \$200 billion in savings, because we didn't need them anyway. That's the speak we hear from this government.

People are rebelling. It's time to think of the people that are paying the taxes, people paying the hydro bills.

This is just another example where if they can hide the tax, that's what they go for, as long as people don't know what they're paying.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. John O'Toole: I always wanted to get up and thank the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, who puts a lot of time and effort and is a true champion of the environment. If you look at his record, he has been the critic of the environment. He stands up for what he believes in and speaks to truth. In fact, the real truth is he does speak, as my colleague from Sarnia–Lambton says—sorry?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Truth to power.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, truth to power—Samia-Lambton.

The real issue here is that in one section of seven sections of the bill—there's one section that is most telling of all the sections, and that is the section where they're hiding the cost—through you, Speaker; I wouldn't speak to the camera unless, of course, it was following me. The fact is, though, that section 3, I believe it is, where they hide the cost is the most telling. What have they got to hide on this? We're meeting on Wednesday on openness and transparency. What is this about? They say one thing and do another; it's almost like a shell game.

Bill 91 purports to do something which it doesn't do. It changes the name of the organization. It changes their name—they all get severance pay or something, or new uniforms or something like that—and then they try to change the definition. I can't believe the treachery that is in this bill, and I only focused on that one section.

The member from Haldimand-Norfolk—I think the content of his remarks was really referring to practical solutions that he put on the table.

Remember, I now know, because of the member from Beaches-East York, that there are four forms of matter: solid, liquid, gas and plasma. I've been advanced.

But see, we live in an innovation economy in society. I'm certain I've talked to Sony and other companies that have ideas; they want some standards and some measures and some enforcement. They're pleased to save the environment. We all share the environment.

Don't let them think that they're fooling anyone in this House, that's for sure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. I return to the member for Haldimand-Norfolk for his response.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yet again, I appreciate the opportunity to just say some additional remarks.

I can understand why the government does want to suffocate debate, and it is embarrassing when we do talk about promises that were made 10 years ago to divert 60% of waste from landfill. Here we are today to find out only 23% of waste is being diverted from landfill.

I tried to be charitable. There have been successes with the tire stewardship, the truck recycling program—this is what some of the fellows tell me. There have been some problems, though. They run deficits, I know. In off-road tires in 2009, they ran a deficit of \$8 million. What was their solution? Jack up the rates. They jacked up the rates by something like 1,000% in that sector.

There was a proposal. Say for a John Deere 9770 combine tire, the disposal fee—unbelievable—is \$1,646.40. If you're combining in British Columbia and you've got to replace a tire, you're looking at \$210. There are five other provinces where there's no fee at all.

One other thing I wanted to mention—and I know it's embarrassing for the government—is in 2010, this government collected something like \$44 million in eco taxes on the waste electrical and electronic equipment program, the WEEE program. Guess what the diversion rate was there? It wasn't 60%. It wasn't 23%. It was 2%. They met 2% of their recycling targets. That's a lot of money for a 98% failure rate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being quite close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1757.

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Continued from back cover

Visitors

Mr. John O'Toole.....	4151
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	4151

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	4151
Mr. John O'Toole	4151

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Lung health

Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	4151
-----------------------------	------

City of Toronto

Mr. Jonah Schein.....	4151
-----------------------	------

Diwali

Mrs. Amrit Mangat	4152
-------------------------	------

Hayter Group

Mr. Monte McNaughton	4152
----------------------------	------

Anniversary of Sikh massacre

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	4152
-------------------------	------

Children at Risk

Mr. Phil McNeely	4152
------------------------	------

Murray Cardiff

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	4153
----------------------------	------

René Lalonde

M. John Fraser.....	4153
---------------------	------

Snowcrest Riders Snowmobile Club

Mr. Norm Miller	4153
-----------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Fiscal Transparency and Accountability

Amendment Act (Pre-Election Reports), 2013, Bill 126, Ms. Scott / Loi de 2013 modifiant la Loi sur la transparence et la responsabilité financières (rapports préélectoraux), projet de loi 126, Mme Scott

First reading agreed to.....	4154
Ms. Laurie Scott.....	4154

Human Rights Code Amendment Act (Genetic Characteristics), 2013, Bill 127, Mr. Colle / Loi de 2013 modifiant le Code des droits de la personne (caractéristiques génétiques), projet de loi 127, M. Colle

First reading agreed to.....	4154
Mr. Mike Colle.....	4154

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Ontario College of Trades

Ms. Laurie Scott.....	4154
-----------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Local Food Act, 2013, Bill 36, Ms. Wynne / Loi de 2013 sur les aliments locaux, projet de loi 36, Mme Wynne

Mr. Ernie Hardeman.....	4154
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4156
Mr. Robert Bailey.....	4158
Mr. John Vanthof.....	4160
Mr. Grant Crack	4162
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	4165
Mr. Jonah Schein.....	4167
Mr. Bill Walker.....	4170
Mr. Norm Miller.....	4171
Third reading vote deferred.....	4172

Order of business

Hon. John Milloy	4172
------------------------	------

Members' Accommodation Allowances Act, 2013, Bill 123, Mr. Milloy / Loi de 2013 sur les allocations de logement des députés, projet de loi 123, M. Milloy

Hon. John Milloy	4172
Mr. Jim Wilson.....	4173
Mr. Gilles Bisson	4173
Second reading agreed to	4178

Members' Accommodation Allowances Act, 2013, Bill 123, Mr. Milloy / Loi de 2013 sur les allocations de logement des députés, projet de loi 123, M. Milloy

Third reading agreed to	4178
-------------------------------	------

**Waste Reduction Act, 2013, Bill 91, Mr. Bradley /
Loi de 2013 sur la réduction des déchets, projet de
loi 91, M. Bradley**

Mr. Michael Prue.....	4178
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn.....	4180
Mr. John O'Toole	4180
Ms. Catherine Fife	4180
Mr. Phil McNeely	4180
Mr. Michael Prue.....	4180
Mr. Norm Miller	4181
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	4182
Hon. Liz Sandals.....	4183
Mr. John O'Toole	4183
Mr. Michael Mantha	4183
Mr. Norm Miller	4183
Mr. Jim McDonell	4184
Ms. Catherine Fife	4185
Mr. Grant Crack.....	4186
Mr. John O'Toole	4186
Mr. Michael Prue.....	4186
Mr. Jim McDonell	4186
Mr. Garfield Dunlop	4187
Ms. Catherine Fife	4188
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur.....	4189
Mr. Jim McDonell	4189
Mr. Michael Prue.....	4189
Mr. Garfield Dunlop	4189
Mr. Bill Walker.....	4190
Mr. Michael Mantha	4192
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur.....	4192
Mr. John O'Toole	4192
Mr. Michael Prue.....	4193
Mr. Bill Walker.....	4193
Mr. Toby Barrett.....	4193
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	4195
Mr. Bill Mauro.....	4195
Mr. Jim McDonell	4195
Mr. John O'Toole	4195
Mr. Toby Barrett.....	4196
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	4196

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 4 November 2013 / Lundi 4 novembre 2013

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. John Yakabuski	4139
Mr. Rick Bartolucci	4139
Mr. Monte McNaughton	4139
Mr. Peter Tabuns	4139
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	4139
Mr. Bill Walker	4139
Hon. Michael Gravelle	4139
Mr. Jeff Yurek	4139
Mr. Percy Hatfield	4139
Hon. Michael Coteau	4139
Ms. Laurie Scott	4139
Hon. John Gerretsen	4139
Mr. Garfield Dunlop	4139
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	4139
Mr. Frank Klees	4139
Mr. Michael Prue	4139
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4139
Mr. Toby Barrett	4140
Hon. Teresa Piruzza	4140
Mr. Jim McDonnell	4140
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4140
Mr. Todd Smith	4140
Hon. Eric Hoskins	4140
Mr. Frank Klees	4140
Mr. Ted Arnott	4140
Mr. Victor Fedeli	4140
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	4140

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Government's record

Mr. Victor Fedeli	4140
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4140

Government's record

Mr. Victor Fedeli	4141
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4141

Pension plans

Ms. Andrea Horwath	4142
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4142

Automobile insurance

Ms. Andrea Horwath	4143
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4143

Cancer treatment

Mr. Ted Chudleigh	4143
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4144

Transportation infrastructure

Mr. Percy Hatfield	4144
Hon. Glen R. Murray	4144

Co-operative housing

Mrs. Laura Albanese	4145
Hon. Linda Jeffrey	4145

Agri-food industry

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	4145
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4146

Pan Am Games

Mr. Paul Miller	4146
Hon. Michael Chan	4146

Research and innovation

Ms. Helena Jaczek	4147
Hon. Reza Moridi	4147

Access to information

Mr. Monte McNaughton	4147
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	4147

Horse racing industry

Ms. Andrea Horwath	4148
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4148

Agri-food industry

Mr. John Fraser	4149
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4149

Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre

Mr. Jeff Yurek	4149
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	4149

Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre

Ms. Peggy Sattler	4150
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	4150

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013, Bill 105,

Mr. Sousa / Loi de 2013 visant à soutenir les petites entreprises, projet de loi 105, M. Sousa

Second reading agreed to 4151

Continued on inside back cover

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**Assemblée législative
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Deuxième session, 40^e législature

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 5 November 2013

Mardi 5 novembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 5 November 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 5 novembre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WASTE REDUCTION ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES DÉCHETS

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 4, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to establish a new regime for the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 91, Loi créant un nouveau cadre pour la réduction, la réutilisation et le recyclage des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le réacheminement des déchets.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise today in response to Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act. It's a pleasure to be here so early in the morning, and all the members here with us as well—a great morning.

To speak about the bill right off the get-go, the Waste Reduction Act, a number of wags have referred to it as a Liberal shell game that shifts eco taxes from consumer receipts to price tags on the store shelves. This bill not only fails to meet the Ontario PC's demand to scrap eco taxes; it also fails to eliminate the Liberals' own recycling cartels and the government's unaccountable oversight agency Waste Diversion Ontario. The government's plan is to give this agency enforcement powers and the authority to set and collect from businesses fees which would then be passed on to consumers as part of the eco tax disclosed on the price tag. The Liberal government is turning over these powers to this agency even though for five long years they've authorized Liberal recycling cartels to impose exorbitant eco taxes on Ontarians, including, recently, the 2,000% tire tax hikes in April and \$40 levies on big-screen TVs in May of this year. Waste Diversion Ontario has broken the trust of Ontarians time and time again and should not be rewarded with more power and a bigger multi-million-dollar budget funded through eco taxes.

The Waste Diversion Act is nothing but sleight of hand. The government claims they're taking steps to meet the Ontario PC caucus's demands to scrap eco taxes. All they've really done is attempt to force busi-

nesses to bury these expensive levies in the cost of their products or to display them on price tags instead of receipts in the store.

What the Liberal government doesn't want you to know is that Bill 91 continues each and every eco tax program. This means that Ontario consumers will still have to pay eco taxes on tires, electronics and household hazardous materials like paint cans and batteries. The only difference will be a higher tax, or an eco tax, displayed on the price tag on the store shelf instead of on the receipt at the cash register. Mr. Speaker, this isn't change. It's a shell game to ensure all of the Liberal eco taxes and revenue will continue to be funnelled into their recycling bureaucracy, which costs Ontario consumers hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

Without telling the public, the Liberals raised this eco tax on big-screen TVs earlier this year by more than 40%, bringing the total levy on big-screen TVs to \$40. The government also targeted Ontario's hard-working farmers with a massive tire tax hike earlier this year. In fact, the environment minister raised the eco tax on John Deere combine tires, for example, to \$823 each, up from \$92—a massive increase.

Interjection: Who can afford that?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, who in the farm community can afford that? Who in any community can afford that?

Still without a real plan for the economy, the Liberal government has spent more than a month claiming that continuing eco taxes and doubling the cost of the blue box program and creating new taxes for Ontario consumers will lead to more jobs. We doubt that, Mr. Speaker.

It's truly sad to see that the best job strategy that the Liberal government could come up with is taking half a billion dollars out of the Ontario manufacturing sector every year in order to subsidize a few green jobs. This is the same risky economic theory that the government used for the Green Energy Act, which cost the province thousands of manufacturing jobs, and we know how that turned out. Still, for some reason, this government actually thinks that to create jobs in the recycling industry, they need to revert back to the same risky economic theory and kill even more jobs in Ontario's manufacturing sector. What's worse is that their cohorts to the left, the NDP, support the Liberal reckless plan to saddle Ontario's manufacturing sector—

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a coalition.

Mr. Robert Bailey: My colleague from Durham, the learned member from Durham says, "coalition," coalition of the billing—with another half a billion dollars in costs, even at the price of killing good jobs at factories in cities

like Hamilton, London and Kitchener—Sarnia as well, I might add. Mr. Speaker, this is unacceptable. Governments shouldn't sacrifice jobs in one sector to create them in another; it should create the right conditions for economic growth in all sectors. Regulate the marketplace and let the private sector take care of job growth.

The reason the Liberals want to force half a billion dollars of new costs on Ontario consumers is to grow the size and power of the government's unaccountable recycling agency, Waste Diversion Ontario, the WDO—that's quite an acronym, the WDO. Bill 91 gives this agency the power to impose new taxes on Ontario's manufacturing sector and to dictate how much each business will have to pay for their recycling programs. Mr. Speaker, we feel this is wrong. Real job creation is not the result of new costs and bureaucracy; it's the result of setting the right conditions and getting the right economic growth because of those conditions.

We put forward a bold plan last November, in one of our white papers, to create jobs in the recycling industry without sacrificing Ontario's manufacturing sector. In our paper, and in the discussions that we had with the industry and consumers across the province, we would suggest that we start by scrapping the Liberal eco tax programs entirely and eliminating the government's useless recycling bureaucracy. We believe that businesses should do their part to recover and recycle materials into new products, but rather than create complicated bureaucracy and massive new costs for consumers, we would simply create the right conditions for economic growth and hope to see those implemented. We would do this by having the environment minister set measurable and achievable recycling targets for certain materials, establish environmental standards, measure outcomes and enforce the rules—that's it.

Having the Ministry of the Environment regulate the recycling industry would establish a direct line of accountability between the government and the business community. Unfortunately, the third party, the NDP, supports the Liberals' efforts to outsource the ministry's regulatory authority to an unaccountable organization called the Waste Reduction Authority, the WRA, hereinafter referred to as the WRA as opposed to the WDO. I don't know if there are any more acronyms here or not, as we go further. Some of the facts, Madam Speaker, on this—

Mr. John O'Toole: Strike a panel on it.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, maybe they'll strike a panel on the WRO, the WDO, and it'll be called the PPO, the panel opposing—anyway, you'll come up with one, the member for Durham, for me, while I'm—

Interjection: Work on that.

Mr. Robert Bailey: —working on that one. I'm ragging the puck here.

Madam Speaker, Bill 91 is nothing more than the Liberal McGuinty government's and Wynne government's desperate attempt to change the channel on their failure to increase waste diversion. In 2008, the Liberals promised to achieve a 60% waste diversion rate. Five years

later, that rate is still stalled at just 23%. The reason is that the Liberals have ignored Ontario's largest source of waste. As a result, they've actually allowed recycling to drop at factories, shopping malls and government buildings. The industrial, commercial and institutional sector, otherwise known as ICI, accounts for 60% of Ontario's waste, yet the Liberals allowed recycling to decrease in this sector from 19% to 12%. Instead of showing leadership in this area, as the member for Caledon did with her bill on recycling cement and aggregates, which went a long way to—it's the kind of example that we should have in this House. Instead of showing leadership on waste diversion, the Liberals have spent all of their time running massive eco tax schemes for tires, electronics and household hazardous materials, which together only make up 3% of the province's waste. After focusing on just a fraction of the waste stream for five years, it's no wonder that this act has been such an abject failure.

0910

Some of the things that we've called for, Madam Speaker—I see I'm coming to the end of my time. We should have much more time to speak on this.

Mr. John O'Toole: Seek unanimous consent.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, I'll ask for unanimous consent to continue.

Anyway, the PC Party plan would be—the Waste Reduction Act fails to meet our two biggest demands: to scrap eco taxes and to eliminate useless bureaucracy. That's why we can't support it.

In November of last year, the Ontario PC Party presented a better way forward: lower costs for businesses and to treat recyclable materials not as waste but as valuable resources that we should recover and recycle into new products. The Ontario PC Party, led by Tim Hudak, would scrap eco taxes, get rid of the Liberal recycling cartels and return all oversight authority back to the Ministry of the Environment, where it truly belongs. Under our plan, the government would set measurable and achievable recycling targets, establish environmental standards and measure outcomes.

That's simply it, Madam Speaker. I might seek unanimous consent for me to continue.

Hon. Liz Sandals: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm happy to stand this morning and speak as the party's environment critic and respond to Bill 91 and the comments made by the member from Sarnia—Lambton.

Speaker, we've heard clearly from Conservatives for a long time about eco fees or eco taxes. I couldn't agree more that we shouldn't be passing on a failed waste diversion plan. We shouldn't be passing on those costs to the people of this province. That's a big part of why we need a strengthened act here and a new framework going forward. Obviously, the other important part is that we're actually failing, absolutely failing this generation and future generations when it comes to waste diversion. We remain a laggard in this country.

But the role that the Conservatives are playing in this debate I find is counterproductive. This is complicated legislation; it's a complicated issue; it deserves serious thought and serious debate. You know, there are a lot of different players involved here, and we all in this House need to roll up our sleeves and make sure that we get this right. But to say that the existing system is not just—that things remaining the way they are is not going to continue to pass costs on to consumers is wrong. If the people of this party want to stop eco fees and eco taxes, then they need to stop the system that's in place right now that allows industry-driven monopolies, basically, to set prices and pass those prices on to consumers. Speaker, that is not working. It is not meeting our environmental obligations and expectations, and it is not driving the kind of innovation in the sector that's necessary to create better products, and it is not creating the incentive or the necessity not to pass those fees on to consumers. So I wish the Conservatives would roll up their sleeves and be part of this debate. Let's get it right. Let's work to deliver this for the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think we really do need to get on with voting on this bill. Bill 91 has now been debated for over 12 and a half hours; 45 individual members have expressed what they have to say about this. In fact, I think it's well defined what the position of each of the three parties is now. What we need is a vote on this bill so it can get to committee, where it can be fine-tuned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. John O'Toole: It was a pleasure this morning to listen to the very eloquent member from Sarnia-Lambton. I like the way he organized his critique of the bill. He did make extensive use of the notes provided to him by our critic and his staff, Michael Harris as well as Shane. His staff did a great job of deconstructing the bill.

He outlined it. Our plan is pretty simple. We want to set measurable, achievable targets based on scientific research, and then we want to monitor it—independent monitoring would be our first objective—and then strict and often severe enforcement. By that, I mean that government should stay out of the business itself, but they've got to set the standards and then monitor and provide consequences for non-conformance.

I thought the member from Sarnia-Lambton summarized the bill succinctly, but I think he did focus on the hidden eco taxes. In his remarks, he made it clear that they haven't cut or reduced them; in fact, they have increased almost all the eco taxes.

Now, here's the larger issue he pointed out: They're focusing on the smaller component of the waste stream. When you think of it, and in his remarks—I might be wrong, but I listened carefully, and we have the same notes, basically. The ICI sector, the industrial, commercial and institutional sector, represents 60% of the waste stream. Really, the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour, so what have they done? In the last 10

years, they've taken the ICI waste stream from, once upon a time, doing 19% recovery down to a measly 12%. So they've gone from first to last, just about the same way with the economy itself. So there's a predictor of future behaviour. This bill does not get us where we need to go.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Todd Smith: I would like to comment on the eloquent 10 minutes in which my friend from Sarnia-Lambton discussed the Waste Reduction Act. He clearly indicated off the top that this is just a Liberal shell game. There's no one who's denying that over on this side, and I don't think probably very many over on the government side would deny that as well. All they're doing is taking the eco fees, which were clearly marked on the shelves, and then embedding the eco fees, which they've received a lot of criticism about over the last two or three years, into the price that's going to be on the item at the cash register.

I was just down south of the border—I was recalling this story a couple of weeks ago—for my daughter's hockey game on Sunday. One of the dads on the hockey team, despite the fact I said he shouldn't do it because he's hurting the Ontario economy, had all four tires on his vehicle changed down there, and it saved him hundreds and hundreds of dollars. I don't recommend this for people, but this is the kind of situation that this government has created in this province, where people are driving south of the border and are planning a trip to have all four tires changed on their vehicle just to save a couple of hundred dollars. The retail sector is saying this is a huge problem, not just for tires but for television sets. Because of these eco taxes that this government has slapped onto all of these electronic devices, people are doing their shopping in other jurisdictions—not just south of the border, but you hear about people heading across the border into Quebec as well to do their shopping because they can save a few dollars because we are the most overtaxed jurisdiction in all of North America.

I would like to say to my friend from Sarnia-Lambton, Bob Bailey: You hit the nail on the head this morning, Bob. People need to wake up to these hidden eco taxes.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Sarnia-Lambton has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Madam Speaker. First off—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Come on down to Sarnia. We'll sell you some good tires down at International Tire.

Right off the go, I'd like to thank the member for Davenport, the Minister of Education, the member for Durham and also the member from Prince Edward-Hastings for their comments today.

0920

Just in my referral here in my notes, I was looking at an article from August. This is from the Toronto Star by Robert Benzie, Queen's Park bureau chief, Wednesday, August 4, 2010. It says here:

"Premier Dalton McGuinty personally pushed for the recycling program that led to" the eco fee disaster "on consumer products despite objections from at least five"—five, count them—"of his cabinet ministers"—some of them might be in the room today, who told him that this would be a disaster and he shouldn't do it, but he went ahead anyway.

"Government insiders"—you know, those ones who slip the brown envelopes under the door—"said at the February 2008 cabinet meeting, where the doomed scheme was approved, ministers loudly railed against it, fearing political damage to the Liberals.

"The senior minister who led the charge warned the Premier" of the day that "the policy could spark a backlash if eco fees were slapped directly on products."

The Premier said, "We can't do this fast enough" ... who had been re-elected with a ... massive majority government just four months earlier."

Anyway, what we're here today to talk about is—well, one thing the member from Prince Edward-Hastings talked about was the individual who saved \$400 on his tires. Well, I think he would have to do that because then he could apply that \$400 savings to his electricity bill which has gone through the roof. That's real recycling, I guess, if you want to look at it that way; that's recycling your money to wherever you can use it for the most good.

To sum up, our bottom line is that we want to scrap the eco taxes and eliminate useless bureaucracy. We want to lower costs for business and individuals, treat recyclable materials not as waste but as actual viable resources, and we should recover and recycle these products.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for—

Mr. John Vanthof: Timiskaming-Cochrane.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Timiskaming-Cochrane; sorry.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. Once again, it's an honour to be able to stand in this House and today speak about Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013.

I'm going to do a more personal take on this. I first got involved in the waste reduction business when I was a member of the public liaison committee for the city of Toronto on the Adams Mine landfill proposal. I was the president of the Temiskaming Federation of Agriculture at that time. I was put on this committee, and I got a crash course in waste management. I remember very clearly—and this was 1995-96—that the focus of this landfill proposal was going to be recycling, because recycling then was the panacea. That's where we had to go, and that was great.

I remember an evening on that committee, and the way they were going to ship the waste from Toronto to the Adams Mine was that they were going to compress it in rail cars. I believe it was 1,500 PSI. They were going to compress it and send it north, and at that point, we would have the chance to recycle. Being a farmer with a mechanical mind and mechanical questions, I stuck up my hand and I asked, "So after it has been compressed to

1,500 PSI, how do you propose that we search through it and recycle?" To which the answer was, "That's why we're giving you money for research, so you can look into that." Basically, the plan wasn't recycling.

There is a point to this, but just as another little point: When they did send the prototype car to northern Ontario—and they were smart. They did send it at the right time of year; it was 40 below when they sent the prototype. We didn't have to worry about recycling because it couldn't even unload. At 40 below, hydraulics just don't work that well in northern Ontario. There was no recycling to be done from that car because nothing was coming out of that car.

But they really focused on the recycling part; that was the whole sales pitch. The funny thing about that is, not much has changed. I was recently asked to speak at a meeting regarding another big proposed landfill in this province. So as I went and looked and did my research, 20 years later, they're still doing the same thing: talking about the opportunities in recycling. It's practical proof that we really haven't gotten that far in 20 years. It's a real problem. It's a real, identifiable problem. I looked at the website 20 years ago—it wasn't websites back then; I'm really dating myself. I still have the material, and basically it was the same stuff. So we really haven't gotten that far on the landfill side in 20 years. But if you look at our numbers, we haven't gotten that far either.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: So do you like the bill?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm getting to that. This bill, Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, has some positives and some negatives. The one thing I think—and I'm going to go back to the eco fees. I'm a farmer. Farmers really didn't like it, especially—I've told this before on one of my hits. The first time I really had experience with eco fees, I went to buy oil filters for my tractors and there was an extra \$100 tacked on. I told the dealer, "That's great. That means I can bring the filters back and you will recycle them for me." No. You still have to bring them to the dump. And that's the problem. With the tires and the rise in the tire price, that's a problem, but there are things that Stewardship Ontario did. I'm going to stick up for them on one point: At least with the tires—we had a couple of big tire piles in my riding, and you could call up Stewardship Ontario, and because of the money they collected they came and they cleaned up the tires. So you know what? The rise in prices all of a sudden is a huge problem, but the fact is that you could actually see some value for the money, because in my riding we got action and we cleaned up a couple of big piles of tires.

It shouldn't be that difficult an issue. My colleague from Nickel Belt—I was in the House and she was talking about mining. Nowadays, if you want to start a new mine, you have to have as part of your plan, and it has to be in your financials, how you are going to remediate it, how you're going to clean it up when that mine closes. So it's complicated, but that's good legislation. And that should be here too, but I'm not sure if that is here.

One of the problems that we continue to have, and I really continue to, have is the concept of the Waste Re-

duction Authority. You know, it sounds good. It sounds like it could be a mediation tool. But it also could be, and it's not really well defined here, another government agency or semi-government agency—I don't know what the proper term is—which we have no real control over. We can name a few of those other agencies which we had no real control over. That in itself is a problem. It's a big problem, because if it's created without authority, these agencies have a tendency to run away with themselves, and I think that's a big problem.

Another problem with this that we have to look into is that specifically in places like where I'm from, northern Ontario, we don't have access to a lot of the same services as more urban parts of the province. Also, our municipalities might not have the same capability, or even want that responsibility, for the recycling portion itself, or with the waste diversion. I think we have to put more thought in how—with a lot of issues in northern Ontario, the distances are bigger and the populations are smaller. We have to look at how we can actually make that work. For those municipalities that have a blue box system, they're also concerned because where this bill comes back down to, and where almost everything comes back down to, is money.

0930

Getting back to the landfill issue, one of the problems we face with recycling, with diversion, in this province is that our neighbour to the south is willing to accept landfill materials at a very cheap price. That's a big problem because, at the end of the day, if it's cheaper to landfill something—unless you put regulations to stop that—it's going to go to landfill. That's a big problem. If you put those regulations in then, yes, the prices of some of your products are going to rise. That's something that we have to be cognizant of and something we're going to have to deal with. It's a big problem. We're hoping that this act finds the fine balance between hurting the retail side and doing what's right environmentally. That's a big issue, because you don't want to drive jobs away, but also you don't want to look the other way and just throw things in a hole and leave it for the next generation.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: So what do you want to do?

Mr. John Vanthof: We want to bring this to committee, and we would like to make—specifically, we need accountability in this, especially in the Waste Reduction Authority. We don't see the accountability in there that needs to be. This is another one of these acts that's over-arching and you can do lots of good things, but you can also do lots of bad things. What we have to do is bring this forward to committee, take our time, listen to everybody involved and actually try and do the right thing, not the political thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I was here for all the remarks for my colleague the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, who added, I thought, a great deal to the discussion this morning. I'll be very quick.

We look forward to having this move on and get to committee, and then we'll have a real discussion when it

gets to committee, when all parties will have the opportunity to provide input on a very important piece of legislation brought forward by my colleague the Minister of the Environment.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. John O'Toole: Once again, I do appreciate the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane. He's always very fair-minded in his comments, and he raised some questions, as we have, on this bill. I think our position is pretty much the same, as we want to see it get to committee and basically deconstruct it and improve it. We'll have to see if the government is willing to listen to our well-thought-through suggestions.

I look at where we've been in Ontario, and I think one of the programs that affects my constituents is the Drive Clean program. Even the Auditor General of Ontario—this is the Ministry of the Environment's role, to make these programs work to clean up the environment, much like Bill 91. There's a program there that—everyone with any insight at all realizes that the old method of doing the test at the tailpipe was really potentially avoiding pollutants going into the environment—

Hon. Ted McMeekin: That's why they changed it.

Mr. John O'Toole: Oh no, but they've stopped that; they've cancelled that. Now it's the onboard diagnostics, the computer system. If the computer system in an older car has a little electrical malfunction within the system, then people have to spend \$400 or \$500, maybe twice, before they get a provisional pass. This is another example of a tax grab.

That's why this one section, number III—I think it's III, where they're actually hiding the tax—yes, it's in part IV; it says “Integrated pricing.” What a fancy term for hiding the eco fee inside the price. When you used to buy a battery, you could see that it cost you \$2 for an eco fee right on the receipt. Now the consumer is completely in the dark and it's a deliberate attempt to cover up, actually, if that's in the proper term, in the price—“Integrated pricing”: This is one more example of a government that would do anything to take your money.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Good morning, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand up and to talk a little bit more about the proposed Waste Reduction Act, which will be replacing the Waste Diversion Act. I'm actually quite thankful that we're still debating this. I understand the Liberal government is expressing some frustration that it's still here, but it was exactly the situation not that long ago that the Minister of Rural Affairs stood up at the request of the Speaker and said, “We're looking to extend this debate,” and here we are. So you can't keep complaining about it, because you extended the debate. So here we are.

You know what? I think the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane actually raises the debate to a whole new level of integrity, because it's the real experience of a former leader in this regard. It must be something for

the young people in the audience to hear that 20 years ago we were still trying to figure out this recycling issue when really there's so much more that we need to take leadership on. The politics of Bill 91 are—you cannot fight it. The reality is, if we don't support this piece of legislation, with all of its flaws, quite honestly, and get it to committee and strengthen it and bring the real lived experiences of people who know this file better than anybody else in this House, we risk waiting another 10 years for this government to do the right thing. The reality is that waste-related issues are very difficult to get on the political radar.

It's amazing, because the PCs—one of their members just said they're supporting it, that they're going to try to make it better, and they're looking forward to it. Yet for two years, they hardly read anything, and they hardly did anything. So here we are.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate. Like many other industries, the recycling industry has a job creation ratio. In auto, for example, for every job on the assembly line, you get about 10 in the community. With this issue as well: The recycling industry creates about 10 times as many jobs as just throwing the stuff away into landfill. Those jobs are out there.

The opposition members all have a right to speak. I don't deny them that. They have the right to speak on every bill in the House if they want to. They've chosen to speak on this one. I think that's great. I think the interest in the environment from the opposition parties is fantastic, and I hope it continues on into the next term.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane has two minutes to reply.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the Minister of Rural Affairs, the member for Durham, my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo and the member for Oakville for their comments.

I always enjoy listening to the member of Durham.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You do?

Mr. John Vanthof: I do. He always brings an interesting perspective. He always brings perspective from his past experiences.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: He does; he has lots of practice in the House.

I was a bit surprised because his colleagues have been very, very negative on this bill, extremely negative, but he said he would like to get it to committee. I would like to thank him for that, because I think we all want to get it to committee. But we all want to make sure we get this right. Right? It hasn't been right for a long time. Anything that we can bring forward in this debate and any time we can get individuals to actually work things out behind the scenes to get this bill right makes a big difference.

I'll give you one that no one has come up with the answer to yet, an agriculture one: agricultural wrap, the

white plastic wrap. We use a pile of it. I'm sure farmers—at least I would: If I knew, when I buy a roll of it, that I have to pay an extra 10 bucks, and I knew I could recycle it, I would gladly do it. Where I am, I can't get rid of it. My dump won't take it. I can't get rid of it. So there's an issue that we should work out. If we could work that one out, I think a lot of the farmers across the province would be much more supportive.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to rise this morning to speak on the Waste Reduction Act. I want to cover a few issues, but I'm going to continue on the plastic wrap that the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane referenced. There is an excellent recycler who basically provides bins to the greenhouse industry and the agricultural industry. You call them when your bin is full. The plastic wrap: They take it away, they replace it, and they're recycling that product. It's an excellent program. It has a value. We have an innovative producer in Ontario who has found a use for that product. So there are opportunities there if government gets out of the way and doesn't impose all of these additional programs and mandates.

0940

We actually do have some pretty innovative producers across Ontario doing innovative things. In my own community we have a bottled water company that has figured out an opportunity on the recycling of spent water bottles. I think their concern and my concern is that Bill 91 will impede their ability to access that raw product.

What is happening with Bill 91 is, you're going to have to have producers who are negotiating with 444 municipalities to get the product out of the blue box. There are a couple of problems with that, not the least of which is: There are 444 municipalities in Ontario. So it's very challenging.

The second problem is, Bill 91 is talking about these intermediaries, which are basically going to become a de facto monopoly. You're not going to be able to negotiate with the municipalities that want to recycle, that want to find end uses for the products that are in the blue box—a great concern to me.

In Bill 91, one of the things that they make reference to in part II is this Waste Reduction Authority. The authority can set and collect fees and is required to appoint a registrar and inspectors. Speaker, we're not getting away from eco fees with Bill 91; in fact, we're entrenching it in legislation. We're actually enabling the Minister of the Environment to force companies to bury the taxes in the cost of their product.

I don't see how Bill 91 does anything to actually solve the problem that, four years ago, I raised in this House during question period when I was made aware of a tire tax that was being imposed on agricultural tires, obviously a much smaller market than the car tire market—larger tires, for obvious reasons. In October of 2009, I questioned the then Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs about a new \$250 fee. That's not the cost of the tire; that's the fee that they added on after you purchased

a single tire. It was being levied on tractor tires when, at the same time, as a point of comparison, a new car tire fee was a small \$5.84. At the time, the minister had what I considered a very disturbing response. It was basically that those fees are now the cost of doing business in Ontario under the Liberal government and that they should treat them as a business expense and “deal with it.”

Today, we see that same out-of-touch approach with Bill 91. This government doesn't seem to understand that government doesn't need to be in every single business. You can actually have innovation. You can encourage innovation without imposing all kinds of additional registrars and inspectors and enforcement agencies. You really just need to get out of the way sometimes.

What I would like to see, if we're talking about improvements to Bill 91: In our blue box—we all represent different parts of Ontario. We all have many municipalities that we try to represent and collect their views so that we can talk about their issues here in this chamber. Let's talk about the blue box, specifically. Again, back to the 444 municipalities across Ontario: Every single one of them has a different list of items that is included in their blue boxes. Why aren't we looking at actually making that consistent province-wide? We all know that the average Ontario resident moves every seven years, so we have—I'm dealing with it all the time in my own municipalities. We have people moving from Caledon to Orangeville, and their blue box items aren't consistent, don't stay the same. Why can't we get into some consistency in what is actually being put in the blue boxes? It would involve a couple of improvements to the system. For one thing, you'd actually have enough product so that there is a need to recycle. If one municipality is collecting—let's use cloth as an example—there isn't enough of the raw material to look at how you can recycle that. If you had every municipality across Ontario accepting the same items, then you start getting into a critical mass where there is an ability for creative thinking, for innovators in our manufacturing sector to actually say, “Okay, I've got enough raw product now. I can make something and I can build something with this new item that is available across the spectrum of Ontario residents.” I personally think that would go a long way to ensure that the current recyclers that are working and are manufacturing and are creating jobs in Ontario would actually see some improvements to a system that we all acknowledge can be better.

There's no shame in admitting that the program could be improved. My honourable colleague from Simcoe-Lambton made reference to the ICI sector—industrial, commercial and institutional. Again, I'm speaking often to manufacturers in my communities who say, “Why do we do a pretty good job of the blue box program, why do we provide that service, which most of us would acknowledge has done very well over the last 25 years, and yet with the ICI sector we're doing a terrible job?” Why can't we tap in to some of those existing programs and encourage the involvement of the ICI sector? Again, it would ensure that we have a critical mass of product

for the manufacturers to think of some innovative uses of stuff like the agricultural plastic wrap and actually use it in a way that is going to improve our economy. There are ways that we can actually do innovative legislation here that would encourage our economy to grow. Bill 91, unfortunately, is not one of them.

We've talked about a number of companies who have raised their concerns about what Bill 91 will ultimately do to their business model in Ontario. You think of the obvious: Canadian Tire, Walmart, Loblaws. When they're talking about how Bill 91 is going to impact their business and how they approach business in Ontario, we have a problem, because you can't be an anomaly. With those multinational companies you have to ensure that there is consistency across the provincial boundaries—quite frankly, across international boundaries. We have to make sure that Bill 91 is going to actually improve the situation in Ontario. What I'm hearing from my recycling companies—companies who are actually in the business today, right now, recycling product and doing an excellent job of it—is that Bill 91 is going to put up barriers. These intermediaries—who's going to pay for that? That's obviously going to end up being incorporated into the fees. I see no decrease in the eco fees under Bill 91. In fact, I see an escalating increase, similar to the College of Trades. If you have enforcement, if you have these intermediaries, if you have a registrar, there's going to be a cost to that. It's the classic: Liberals come up with an idea. It's the Liberal way. Someone else has to pay. That's what I see in Bill 91 and it disturbs me greatly. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's good to stand here today and continue on with this debate, because we've heard many members from the Liberal side explain that there has been 12 hours of debate and it's time to move on. But, as we know, the Liberals extended the debate, and that's a good thing, because there are a lot of speakers here that, as we can see, still want to contribute to this bill.

0950

I enjoyed listening to the member from Dufferin-Caledon. She mentioned the Blue Box Program and the fact that there needs to be consistency in the kind of things you put in the blue box, so that everyone has an understanding of what they're recycling. If you're moving from one town to the other, it can get confusing. I know that when we started the Blue Box Program sometimes your blue box wouldn't be picked up if you didn't have the right material in there to recycle, which gets frustrating. We want to make sure that we have education for the public and make it convenient for them to recycle. When you're in committee and you do the work with the committee, part of that could be looking at a system to deliver information to consumers about what to put in the recycling box, and keep it consistent all over. I did like that suggestion.

There are concerns about the bill, of course. The Waste Reduction Authority is one concern that has come

up. The Canadian Environmental Law Association has concerns about taking away that power of oversight from the ministry; if there are issues with waste reduction and the Waste Diversion Act; if it's going to be fair if the Waste Reduction Authority deals with that, because right now we have a system in place where there's accountability. The ministry has their lawyers that would deal with those infractions, and then, in turn, the Attorney General looks after that. So those systems are in place, and moving that to the Waste Reduction Authority, we have to make sure that there is the right oversight in order to do that before we look at changing authority.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I believe there has been more than 13 hours of debate on this bill, and I think it's probably time to send it to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a pleasure to stand and comment on what I've been hearing with regard to Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act.

Really and truly, when we take a look at what the government has done, all they've done is table a bill with the stated purpose of, in fact, revoking the Waste Diversion Act, which was passed by the former PC government as a way of extending the life of Ontario's landfills, create jobs in the recycling sector, as well as assist our municipal partners by creating a more stable Blue Box Program.

I listened to the debate on both sides and, really and truly, what this boils down to is the fact that the Waste Reduction Act is a Liberal shell game that really, in fact, shifts the eco taxes from consumer receipts to price tags on store shelves. I look at it this way: Before they had eco taxes—you were buying a product; now they add the eco fees, which is a form of tax. Now they're going to put that on, and then they're also going to charge an additional 13% on top of those eco fees, so they're getting more tax money, more revenues, to probably pay for a lot of the scandalous things that this government has been involved in over the last 10 years. It's just another way of getting more revenue as well.

The bill also not only fails to meet the Ontario PCs' demand to scrap eco taxes, but it also fails to eliminate the Liberals' recycling cartels and the government's unaccountable oversight—Waste Diversion Ontario. As you can see, Speaker, this particular bill isn't doing anything other than crippling the economy, crippling—

Interjections.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's nice to hear that I've actually hit a sore spot.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. We have one person speaking: the member for Chatham—Kent—Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'll wrap it up very quickly—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): That's it.

The member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's been interesting to actually participate in this debate on Bill 91. It is a very important environmental issue.

I come from a riding where we have a landfill, and right now there's an environmental assessment being done to try to increase the height of that landfill by about six metres. Certainly, it's not—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the member for Oakville to come to order. I can't hear the speaker.

Please return to your comments.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I can hear myself, Speaker, so, hopefully, the viewing audience can hear it.

I was talking about a landfill in my own riding of Welland. It's only one of two landfills that are left in the whole Niagara Peninsula. The one in Grimsby, in the Leader of the Opposition's riding, cut themselves a deal, way back when, where they would only take the waste from four surrounding municipalities. My municipality wasn't as "on" at the time; they didn't put that into their agreement. So we're getting waste from eight of the municipalities across the region, because all the other landfill sites had reached their capacity, and they have subsequently closed.

Certainly, people who have to live in residential neighbourhoods around landfill sites aren't happy about it, just like people aren't necessarily happy about gasification or other methods of dealing with waste. So it's very important to continue to divert waste in any way that we can.

I have to agree with the member from Dufferin—Caledon. There are better ways to make it easier for people to divert. There are some provinces where you can just throw all your recycling together in a blue bag and they take it somewhere and it gets diverted at some kind of a facility. So the diversion rates in those kinds of jurisdictions are much higher.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We'll return to the member for Dufferin—Caledon. You have two minutes.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I appreciate the feedback. I think what is most important to remember about Bill 91 is that this is not a jobs plan. This is not encouraging innovation. This is not encouraging new businesses or existing businesses to figure out innovative ways to recycle the products that we all acknowledge and understand need to be recycled and can be recycled.

Bill 91 would enable the creation of more new taxes, more new fees, more bureaucracy and half a billion dollars in new costs for Ontario's manufacturing sector, which I think we need to remember is shrinking under the Liberal government. If we keep putting more and more "thou shalt" on the manufacturing sector, then they will go elsewhere. We have to understand that there is a cause and effect of what happens in this chamber. When we impose new rules, new legislation, there are decisions that are being made on, "Will I continue to operate in

Ontario? Will I go to another jurisdiction that has a better way of managing their waste diversion products?"

Red tape is not the solution for more waste diversion. All that it's doing is monitoring and putting enforcement on a product that is already monitored by our municipal level of government.

Quite frankly, I think that our municipal partners understand the value of recycling and understand the value of encouraging blue box use. I think we can do some stuff here at the provincial level to help them, but we certainly don't need to pretend that they have no level of knowledge and understanding of how it can be improved.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm very pleased to have been asked to speak on this bill this morning. I'd also like to thank our PC MPP from Kitchener—Conestoga for his strong leadership in opposing Bill 91.

Speaker, Bill 91 fails to scrap eco taxes and the government's unaccountable oversight agency, Waste Diversion Ontario. After many years of having broken the trust of Ontarians, they should not be awarded with more power and an even bigger multi-million-dollar budget at the price of eco taxes.

I know this eco tax issue very well. I remember working in our family's hardware and auto parts store in June 2010. In fact, on June 30, 2010, a bag of concrete mix, which is every hardware and building supply store's number-one seller apart from products like two-by-fours and drywall and things like that, was selling for \$3.99. The store was closed on July 1 for Canada Day. When our store opened on July 2, the very first customer of the day went up to the checkout and bought 70 bags of concrete mix. That concrete mix sold for \$3.99 plus a \$4 eco tax. The Dalton McGuinty Liberals put a \$4 eco tax on top of a \$3.99 product. It more than doubled the price of the number-one selling product in any hardware and building supply store across the province.

1000

The list goes on and on. On July 2, 8,000 products in hardware and building supply stores across the province of Ontario had massive eco taxes applied to them. A bag of sheep manure had a 50-cent eco tax on top of that. A bag of cattle manure had a 50-cent eco tax on top of that. A bag of grass seed had a 50-cent eco tax. A bag of potting soil—I mean, the list went on and on and on. A clock radio that sold for \$3 had an \$8 eco tax on top of that. That's the legacy of the Dalton McGuinty-Premier Wynne Liberals when it comes to this failed eco tax policy.

It's frustrating for Ontarians to see a government now introducing a piece of legislation that's going to bury those eco taxes into the price of the products. People in Ontario will have no idea why a bag of concrete mix is going to jump 100% in cost. It's going to kill jobs in the province of Ontario. It's despicable that the Liberal government can sit here and pass a piece of legislation that is

going to, quite frankly, take the people of Ontario for a ride. I think they're going to live to regret this.

Interjection.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Of course, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is sitting here trying to shout me down when I'm actually speaking the facts. I know first-hand what the Liberals have done to eco taxes in the province of Ontario, and I'm going to explain what they're going to do further with Bill 91.

It's simple why the PC caucus cannot support this bill. It fails to meet the two very clear demands that Ontario needs right now: (1) eliminating useless bureaucracy; and (2) and most importantly, scrapping eco taxes.

Bill 91 is going to increase the price of everyday products for the people of Ontario. iPods are going to skyrocket in price, much like their federal cousins, when Stéphane Dion was the leader, wanted to bring in the iPod tax. This is what Bill 91 is going to do. It's going to increase the price of iPods and iPads, too. Televisions are going to skyrocket. In fact, I represent a riding in southwestern Ontario. I fear that Bill 91 is going to drive customers to the US to shop. Televisions are going to go up—in some cases \$70, in some cases \$100, depending on the price of televisions. Cross-border shopping, mark my words, will skyrocket with Bill 91. We're talking about everyday items that are going to have an eco tax buried in them. Consumers are not going to know what they're paying. They're just going to know that products in Ontario are a heck of a lot more expensive than anywhere else outside of Ontario.

There are better and more realistic ways, going forward, to protect our environment, to handle our recyclable materials while lowering costs for businesses. Instead of creating more waste, we need to be looking for ways to recover and recycle them into new products. A year ago, our colleague from Kitchener—Conestoga presented our PC plan to set measurable and achievable targets for recycling, establishing environmental standards and ways to measure these outcomes, one that would not sacrifice Ontario's beleaguered manufacturing sector.

We would start this by scrapping the eco taxes, getting rid of the government's recycling cartels and allowing the Ministry of the Environment to truly do its job by restoring oversight authority back to the ministry.

Speaker, I want to be clear again about Bill 91. It is going to kill jobs in the province of Ontario. Probably the best story that I've heard on Bill 91—and I'm hoping the Minister of the Environment is listening to this debate in the House—is that I had a large electronics consumer company in to Queen's Park. Their sales in Ontario a number of years ago were \$1.2 billion. That's what they sold just to consumers in the province of Ontario—an electronics manufacturer. This year they're going to be down to \$550 million—so from \$1.2 billion to \$550 million. They told me directly that with Bill 91 there's a good chance that they're going to move their head office outside of the province of Ontario. That's going to create more unemployment in Ontario. I truly do hope that the Minister of the Environment is talking to these large employers in Ontario.

Our party put out, when I was the economic development critic, a plan to create 300,000 manufacturing jobs in the province of Ontario. Our leader, Tim Hudak, and I announced our plan in the summer. We have a plan to create 300,000 new advanced manufacturing jobs. We're going to eliminate the productivity gap in Ontario when it comes to manufacturing versus our southern neighbours, and we're going to make Ontario the number one jurisdiction in the world for advanced manufacturers to come to.

We know, through several studies—Boston Consulting being the latest—that the United States is going to create five million advanced manufacturing jobs over the next five years. Ontario needs to get a share of those, and our plan is to create 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Again, Bill 91 is going to, I think, further devastate the manufacturing sector in the province of Ontario. I hope the Liberal government is paying attention and speaking to these stakeholders, because now, more than ever, we need these jobs in Ontario.

The Liberal government claims that they're taking steps to meet the PC caucus demands to scrap eco taxes, but all they're really doing is attempting to force businesses to bury these expensive levies in the cost of their products or to display them so that consumers can't see them, and we think that's wrong. The bill, as it currently stands, would give the Minister of the Environment the ability to wind down ineffective programs and regulate organizations, if desired. However, this is highly unlikely or could reasonably take a very long time before happening, if ever.

Again, this government claims to be scrapping eco taxes. They're doing the complete opposite. All that they're doing is burying this cost in the price of the products. I just can't state strongly enough that in my region of the province, cross-border shopping is running rampant right now. I fear that with the prices of televisions and iPods and clock radios and iPads and computers—and the list goes on and on—with the prices of products going up, it's just driving people across the border. Whether it's across the ferry in Sombra near Sarnia—Lambton or across the bridge to Port Huron from Sarnia or across the Ambassador Bridge in Detroit, people in Ontario will be buying products in the United States, killing jobs at the retail level in all of our towns along our main streets. I just hope the government is listening.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1009 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to introduce members from the Chicken Farmers of Ontario today in the gallery: Henry Zantingh, Murray Opsteen, Gary Raycroft, Rob Dougans and Paul Bulman. It was a pleasure to meet with them this morning.

I would like to encourage all members to attend the Chicken Farmers of Ontario reception this evening in the dining room.

Welcome to Queen's Park to the Chicken Farmers of Ontario.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Speaker, it's not an introduction but a point of order: I believe we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear lapel pins in recognition of Lung Cancer Awareness Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbon for this month. Do we agree? Agreed.

Carry on, member from Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Today, the page captain is Nicholas Edward Scarcelli. He's joined today in the members' gallery by his dad, Dan Scarcelli; his sisters, Vanessa and Olivia Scarcelli; and his uncle Dan Demsar. Please welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I am pleased to introduce, from the Canadian Automobile Association—here today for their annual lobby day—CAA's president, Mr. Jay Woo, CAA CEO Mr. Nick Parks, and the CAA vice-president of insurance, Mr. Matthew Turack.

I'd also like to remind all members of the House about the CAA reception in the legislative dining room after question period today.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Particularly in my capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Food, I'd like to welcome the Chicken Farmers of Ontario and the Association of Ontario Chicken Processors to Queen's Park today. I hope everyone will join them in the legislative dining room for their reception.

Mr. Michael Harris: I too would like to welcome representatives of the CAA visiting Queen's Park today; two representatives in fact representing CAA North and East Ontario: President Christina Hlusko and board member Frances Mannarino. Welcome to Queen's Park. I look forward to meeting with you later today.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I want to echo the comments from the member from Thornhill and the member from Kitchener-Conestoga and welcome the Canadian Automobile Association to Queen's Park for their advocacy day.

Specifically, I'd like to welcome the chair for CAA South Central Ontario, Bill Carter; board members Janet Lafortune and Ethel Taylor; and members of CAA's government and community relations team.

I, like the member from Thornhill, invite everyone to join the CAA for their lunch reception in committee rooms 228 and 230 following question period.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my pleasure today to welcome Mr. Bill Laidlaw, who's with us in the gallery. He's executive director of the Ontario Association of Food Banks. Welcome to Queen's Park, Bill.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I too would like to welcome representatives of the CAA here to Queen's Park for their annual advocacy day, including a resident of Windsor

and chair of the CAA South Central Ontario, Mr. Bill Carter.

Mr. Grant Crack: It's also a pleasure for me to welcome members of the Chicken Farmers of Ontario and also the Association of Ontario Chicken Processors across the province. We have a number with us today: Henk Lise, Murray Opsteen, Gary Raycroft, Adrian Rehorst, Mike Terpstra, Ryan VanTil, Ed Verkley; CFO director and chair, Henry Zantingh; and Lucy McKee. Again, I welcome them. I know the Minister of Rural Affairs has some more to introduce as well.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to introduce in this Legislative Assembly here today one of my constituents from Barhaven. Fighting for distracted driving demerit points is Rick Levesque. It's a pleasure to have you here.

I'd also like to introduce a couple of my other colleagues who support our initiative as well. We have both Matt Hiraishi and Doug DeRabbie from the Insurance Bureau of Canada; Elliott Silverstein from CAA; and, of course, Frank Nott from the Trillium auto dealers.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'd like to welcome friends and students from the grade 5 class at Dewson Street Public School, and their teachers and parents. Welcome to the Legislature today.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'd also like to introduce some other members of the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, a group that is visiting here today: Murray Booy, Paul Bulman, Michael Burrows, Rob Dougans, Michael Edmonds, Chris Horbász, and, from the riding of Peterborough, my good friend Tim Klompmaker.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On behalf of my colleague Jack MacLaren of Carleton-Mississippi Mills, I would like to introduce the mother of page Phoebe Gao, Sharon Gao; her father, Wei Gao; and brother, Leo Gao. They will be in the public gallery this morning.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to recognize Dave Smith, a great restaurateur and philanthropist from Ottawa, and his friend Bob Simpson, here today in the Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, every day I worry about Ontario's growing debt and our anemic pace of economic growth and job creation, which has caused you to lower expectations on economic growth. I do sincerely hope that Thursday will be a turning point and we'll finally see the Wynne Liberal plan to grow our economy that's spinning out of control. But I worry about your penchant for kicking things down the road. In 10 months, you've launched 36 different panels. Your governing philosophy seems to be, "Why put off till tomorrow what you can delay indefinitely with a panel today?"

Let me ask you directly, Premier: Will the fall economic statement on Thursday contain any more panels that will kick this can down the road even further?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just respond to the Leader of the Opposition by asking him if his party is going to support the Supporting Small Businesses Act. We're trying to get that piece of legislation through, so my hope is that we'll be able to get it through committee. My understanding is that the opposition needs to support us in getting that through committee and getting it back to the House.

In terms of the work that we've been doing, I would say to the leader of the party that he would remember that we have more than recovered all of the jobs that were lost as a result of the economic downturn. We continue to work to invest in people and invest in infrastructure and to create a business climate—including with the small businesses act—that will allow businesses to thrive and will allow businesses to continue to hire and expand. I hope they will join with us in that work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I don't think I got an answer to the Premier's question. She asked me a question, Speaker, and I'm glad to say that, yes, we did vote for that bill—yesterday, as a matter of fact, Premier—so you might want to loop in with your House leader to get updated information.

Let me get back to a more serious matter. Your philosophy continues to be to postpone tough decisions to panels, to conversations and consultations. It has now been 10 months. You say that you're for job creation, but, Premier, not everybody can work for the government. We also need a healthy, thriving private sector.

You've abandoned any attempt to try to control spending. Your wage freeze has been abandoned. You have not moved on fixing the broken arbitration system. Don Drummond has basically become a missing person in the province of Ontario when it comes to his report.

I worry that your only alternative, if you won't control spending, is to increase taxes. Will the fall economic statement contain a study, a panel, a consultation—anything—that's going to increase taxes on hard-working Ontario families?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate that the party opposite supported the bill yesterday. They are now blocking it at committee, so it would be very helpful if they would help us move it through committee so that we could get that act in place, so we could support small businesses.

In terms of what the member opposite will see in the fall economic statement, we've been very clear that investing in people, investing in infrastructure and investing in a business climate that will allow businesses to thrive, we believe, is the way forward.

1040

Now, the Leader of the Opposition would like to focus everything in our power on fighting the deficit. The trouble is, if we do that—if we do not make the investments in business and in people and in infrastructure that are necessary—at the end of the day, according to his plan, there will be nothing to fight for. We want to fight for jobs; we want to fight for growth. We want to put the

conditions in place so that that growth can happen. That's what we're doing. My hope is that he will join with us and help us to support that kind of growth.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, we're going to fight against the growing Liberal debt and fight for job creation and opportunity to make Ontario again—I do that each and every day because, quite frankly, somebody has to do it because you're not.

All we see now are 36 studies. You've made no difficult decisions to actually control spending in the province of Ontario. We've put forward 10 questions to the finance minister. I hope he'll take the time to respond to those questions, standing in the name of Mr. Fedeli, including the fact that you had counted it in your plan on \$6 billion in savings for a wage freeze that you threw under the bus when you became Premier. So where are you going to find those \$6 billion?

Let me ask you a direct question, because I'm concerned about this. I understand the Liberals are contemplating increasing education property taxes. They're going to try to do it. It's a very sneaky education property tax hike. Other than an economic study, statement or studying that further—please tell me that that is not being considered by the Liberal government. You're not going to ask hard-working families, already strapped, to increase their property taxes to pay for your overspending.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the leader of the third party really wants—of the opposition, sorry. The Leader of the Opposition wants to have it both ways. On the one hand, he says Don Drummond is not someone we've paid attention to, which is just not true; 60% of what Don Drummond recommended, we have paid attention to. There are other issues that Don Drummond raised in his report that we have said, "Yes, we have to look at those things." He can't have it both ways. Either we take the advice of a well-respected economist like Don Drummond, which we have done and are doing, and we examine all of those issues and we put those into our documentation to say, "You know, these are things that we have to look at"—we are interested in investing in people, investing in infrastructure and the business climate. What they want to do is slash and cut services to people; we are not going to do that. We believe that the people of Ontario deserve better than that.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, my question is for the Premier.

Leader, I think you got your answer about the new taxes, by the way.

This week marks the fifth anniversary of Ontario becoming a have-not province. Let me remind you that when you took office, Premier, Ontario was a robust province and actually paid out equalization payments to those needy provinces. So far, your government has received nearly \$10 billion in equalization payments. In

those same five years, provincial revenue has increased by \$17 billion. So between equalization payments and increased revenue, we're talking about tens of billions of extra dollars in extra tax.

I have a simple question: How is it that you're still running a deficit and can't balance a budget?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It's evident from the question that the member hasn't been reading the budgets year over year. It's evident that the member opposite hasn't been looking at the tremendous—and is not aware of a global recession that has hit the entire world. And he has not, obviously, paid attention to the effects it's having on all provinces and that of Canada. Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

I have a list of about six names in my head. I'll only use one for now, but I'll come back to you. Member from Renfrew, come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Our priority has been clear throughout. We have been controlling our spending. We've been very disciplined in the way we're taking the measures necessary to respond to the recession, and it's working. We're creating more jobs. We're cutting our spending, and Ontario and Ontarians are getting ahead.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: You know, during the recession, the member from Leeds–Grenville actually had hair. That's how long ago we're talking here, Speaker.

Let me tell you that Don Drummond had some—and I did that with his blessing, Speaker. Don Drummond had some serious recommendations. He called for a sharp degree of fiscal restraint, for a wrenching reduction from the path that spending is now on, and for you to act swiftly and boldly. But you didn't do any of that. Spending continues. It's absolutely out of control. So how are you going to balance the budget by 2017-18?

Your finance minister says, "We'll grow the economy to get increased revenues." But the Bank of Canada, only two weeks ago, said that we will not meet our growth expectations this year or next. We've failed on spending—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: And there's a dichotomy, Mr. Speaker. There's no leadership from that side. They feel that austerity measures that we've taken—and we have taken many to control and actually cut spending year over year. We're the only government in all of Canada to have achieved that, but we are also the government that's investing in its people. We're investing in infrastructure; we're making strategic investments to provide for more jobs and stimulate economic growth. They choose not to do that, and we will.

We choose also to lower taxes for small business. They're holding that up, Mr. Speaker. I ask them: Why are they holding up small businesses, 90% of which would no longer pay this health tax, and holding up a

committee? Stand up for the people of Ontario and our businesses.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, I'll stand up for Ontario right now, right behind my leader, Tim Hudak.

We have some serious questions about your ability with numbers. You haven't made the tough decisions the Drummond report called for. Spending is not going down and the Bank of Canada says we won't hit our growth targets, so revenues will not go up. As spending is not going down, it's not possible to balance the budget without the \$6-billion planned savings from the wage freeze. And with revenues not going up, you're obviously planning further tax increases. We just heard one acknowledged to our leader a few minutes ago.

Enough of this nonsense; enough of the political spin. Come clean. Will you tell us how it's even remotely possible for you to balance the budget in 2018, with spending up and revenues down?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I tell them to come clean. I ask them to come clean as well. Pass the bill to support small business. That is what we're doing. That is creating jobs and that is stimulating growth.

When it comes to some of the measures that we've taken to reduce spending, we've done it without their support. They voted against the very issues that we're putting forward that Drummond recommended, and as a result we've actually cut spending year over year.

More importantly, to those watching on TV, a number of austerity measures have been taken right across Canada, more so than anywhere else right here in Ontario. We know that other parts of the world have had to suffer through their austerity measures because they haven't made the necessary investments in their future. We're doing both, and now it's time for us to make those investments, to create those jobs, to stimulate that growth—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Charles Sousa: —and to ensure that Ontarians have a future, have a better tomorrow.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. I continue to be concerned about people who continue to stand when I stand. The tradition and the convention is that you immediately sit down. Your microphone's turned off anyway, and you're stealing my time.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Ontario families are more and more concerned about a government that seems less and less clear about their plans for Ontario's future. For months the Premier insisted that new tolls and taxes that hit family budgets were the only way to pay for new transit. Then, last week, she announced a different plan that involved floating bonds.

Has the Premier ruled out new taxes and tolls that hit family budgets?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What we are determined to do is to build—to continue to build—transit across the province and particularly in the GTHA. We know that investment in infrastructure across the province, whether it's roads and bridges in rural and northern communities, whether it is transit in our urban centres and in the GTHA—all of that investment is necessary. It's necessary in the short term because it creates huge job opportunities, but in the long term it is what will drive the economic growth that is so necessary. If we do not have that infrastructure in place, if we do not have those transit projects in place, then people's quality of life will continue to suffer and businesses will not be able to move through the congested areas. So we are going to continue to build transit, and we hope that the third party will support us.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: A few short months ago, the Premier made a splashy announcement about a transit funding panel whose job was to study the studies on studies about new taxes and tolls. But now, before the panel has reported back, she has floated a totally different idea. Can the Premier tell us anything about her plan?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Contrary, obviously, to the belief of the leader of the third party, there are a number of things that we need to do in order to be able to continue to invest in infrastructure across the province. The green bonds are one part of that, Mr. Speaker. Anne Golden is working with her team to put out a report by mid-December that will give us some advice on what other kinds of mechanisms we should put in place in order to have a revenue stream to be able to continue to build transit. So we continue on that path. There's not one answer to the question of how do we continue to build transit in the GTHA. It's a complex issue. There are a number of things that we're going to have to do. The green bonds are part of that infrastructure answer, but there is more that we will have to do, and that's why Anne Golden will be giving us her report.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People want some sense that their government has a plan to confront Ontario's challenges, but when they look at the Liberals at Queen's Park, they see a party throwing everything at the wall in a desperate hope that something will stick. The Premier was clear that her plan was to slap new taxes and tolls on family budgets. Now she's throwing out different ideas but can't say what they'll cost, what they'll achieve or when they might happen. Speaker, can the Premier tell families in Ontario that she won't be hitting them with new unfair taxes, or do they have to wait for the endless panels, conversations and discussions to actually get an answer?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to address the last part of that comment, the ques-

tion, first, which is to say: Yes, we do believe in talking to people about decisions. We do believe that getting input on issues is important. I'm sorry that the third party doesn't agree with that, but we do think that it's important to talk to experts and to the people of Ontario about issues before we make policies.

In terms of a plan, we have invested \$16 billion in transit across this province. We are building transit in the GTHA, in particular. The Big Move is in place, but we have put in place funding for transit in municipalities across the province, through the gas tax. We have a plan; we know that it's very important to implement that plan. We are implementing that plan and we are working on getting the revenue to make sure that we'll be able to continue implementing it.

What we have not seen is the plan from the third party on how they would build transit or what transit they would build.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. I want to turn to another issue where the government seems to be scrambling for some answers. People in this province are worried about finding and keeping good jobs. For years, the government championed a policy of no-strings-attached corporate tax giveaways and insisted that those giveaways would help create 600,000 jobs in this province. Does the Premier think that plan was working?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, those changes that we made, and I think the leader of the third party is referring to, among other things, the HST—and, of course, those predictions are coming true. Job creation: Since the bottom of the recession in June 2009: almost 500,000 jobs have been created; 95% of those jobs have been full-time jobs and over 80% of those jobs have been created in the private sector, exactly where we want to see them. So we actually are making success in precisely this area. We have nearly a million people working in the manufacturing sector in this province, and we're working hard to continue to create jobs there. We've got two regional economic development funds that have also helped to create and sustain more than 20,000 jobs across this province. We are meeting with success as a result of these changes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Finance spoke vaguely about a plan for targeted tax relief to help companies that are actually ready to make investments in this province. It's exactly the sort of plan that the Liberals have insisted wasn't necessary for years, because their no-strings-attached corporate giveaways were supposedly creating hundreds of thousands of jobs. Is the Premier now admitting that the old plan was a failure?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the NDP wants to go back to reckless taxes and uncontrolled spending. That's not what we're doing here. More importantly, they'd prefer us not to take those measures that are being used in other parts of the world to promote and support R&D spending.

We are looking for ways for our companies to be more innovative, to improve their productivity, to be more competitive, and in Ontario we'll achieve that by partnering with them and taking the measures necessary to support business in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, once again we see Liberals scrambling and people paying the price.

Richard is one of the many young people who wrote us concerning his job prospects, and he's in a pickle. He moved to a new town to improve his job prospects and so that his fiancée could go to school. But jobs are in such demand that 300 people are showing up for temp positions, and he and his fiancée are wondering how they're going to make the bills. Richard and his fiancée don't need empty promises of a vague plan for the future from a scrambling government. They need real plans right now.

Will the Premier's fall economic statement include anything for people like Richard, or just more warmed-over, vague plans that don't have any details?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, young people in Ontario, people like Richard, who are starting off, are looking for opportunities—opportunities that can only be had if we partner with business, not fight against them. The NDP voted in committee against supporting small business yesterday—that's uncalled for; that's unacceptable—and you partnered with the PCs, no less, to do just that. We have to work together for the benefit of the people of Ontario, not for your political gains.

We will support them. We will continue to do what's right, and that includes incentives to promote those jobs and to help people like Richard.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This is a question to the Minister of Health. Minister, yesterday you indicated that you could not intervene in the case of Kimm Fletcher because your Committee to Evaluate Drugs determined that Avastin isn't proven to be effective in prolonging survival in those with her diagnosis. But that committee's report, which you shared with me yesterday, in point 4, states: "The ... studies showed that the use of" Avastin "in patients with ... GBM was"—was—"associated with higher progression-free survival rates...."

Minister, how can you continue to duck this issue? Will you now stand in your place and act on what your committee says: that Avastin can help prolong Kimm Fletcher's life and others with the same cancer? Why are you failing to take action to save the lives of Ontarians?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, this is kind of remarkable. If the member would actually read the next paragraph, he would see that the committee noted

that using historical estimates of survival as a basis of comparison is not reliable because treatment standards have evolved and historical rates are derived from studies that used older, less effective treatments.

If the member opposite would tell me what exactly he is recommending—is he recommending that we move back to the days when ministers, when political people made determinations about what drugs were covered? I would disagree with that. The right thing to do, Speaker, is to let these decisions rest with the experts. If he's recommending that we have one solution for one patient, I reject that as well.

So my question to the member opposite is: Tell me what your policy is on appropriate coverage of drugs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Minister, I want you to be the Minister of Health. I think it's shameful that you continue to hide behind the Committee to Evaluate Drugs as if its recommendations were binding pronouncements, when they are not. You would be aware that the committee's recommendations are frequently rejected by executive officers. At no time is any mention made that you, as Minister of Health, cannot have any input into what can only be described as an ambiguous drug evaluation process at best.

Minister, helping Kimm Fletcher won't save Liberal seats. There are no gas plants involved here.

On behalf of Kimm Fletcher and others like her, I'm asking you to show some compassion for a brave young woman who only wants to spend as much time with her family as possible.

1100

Premier, is this the kind of health minister that you want running Ontario? If she can't provide health care to vulnerable Ontarians, she—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Under the circumstances that we find ourselves in, I'm going to ask that all members show some restraint, please. I would appreciate all members doing that.

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we're talking about a mother. We're talking about a mother with two little children, a little seven-year-old and a little nine-year-old. This is a woman who has been given a very, very serious and tragic diagnosis.

Our health care system, every single day, does everything it can to support people as they struggle with various health issues. I ask the member again: Is he asking that we revert to a situation where political decisions are made around who gets what drugs, or do we respect the advice we get, not just from our Committee to Evaluate Drugs, but Health Canada? Health Canada has said there are no data demonstrating an improvement in disease-related symptoms or increased survival with Avastin in the treatment of GBM.

This is a tragic story, and I'm asking the member opposite to take the politics out of this.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Last week, I asked the minister about threats by Cancer Care Ontario to cut all cancer surgery in Windsor due to an escalating dispute regarding thoracic surgery. The minister brushed off my question and refused to intervene or to promise the uninterrupted continuation of these services in our home community. Windsor and Essex county residents do not take lightly threats to our health care services, and neither do I. So I ask again: Will the minister act immediately to protect cancer services in Windsor and Essex county?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. The member from Windsor West and I have spoken about this issue on several occasions because she is determined to do everything she can to provide the highest-quality care for people in Windsor.

Cancer Care Ontario has changed how they determine what level of hospital should be performing surgery for specific conditions. In this particular case, for this kind of surgery, they've set a threshold of 150 surgeries. The evidence is very clear: Mortality rates have been cut in half as a result of the quality improvement initiatives that Cancer Care Ontario has put in place. I want every person in this province to have access to the highest-quality care. That does mean sometimes consolidating so that volumes deliver the best outcomes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: That's an unfortunate response. Today, Doreen Gravelle, a 75-year-old Windsor woman who is both a cancer survivor and a patient, is staging a sit-in at Windsor Regional Hospital. She's there today to send a message that care close to home is indispensable for both patients and their families. This brave and ill woman is doing all that she can to protect services for the people in her community. Can the minister tell this House why she has not felt the same obligation as Mrs. Gravelle to stand up for Ontario patients?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, you've heard me say in this House many times that Ontarians have amongst the highest cancer survival rates anywhere in the world. They will continue to drive even better outcomes for people with cancer, and that does mean that sometimes programs are consolidated in order to reduce mortality rates for patients.

It's important to note that cancer services will continue in Windsor. They will continue. I have spoken to Cancer Care Ontario about the issue, around the tone of the letter, and I have been assured that patients in Windsor will continue to receive cancer care. One particular procedure, thoracic surgery, will be moved to a centre with higher volumes because it saves lives.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités, l'honorable Brad Duguid. During challenging economic times, various employment services and training pro-

grams offered by government are especially important and valued. This is particularly true of the Employment Ontario network.

I've heard from some of our local community service providers that they are concerned about losing funding for some of the critical programs they provide to Etobicoke residents. Service providers like Community Micro-Skills Development Centre on Vulcan Street, the Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning, and the YMCA of Greater Toronto on Albion Road will all be victimized by funding cuts the federal government is planning to make.

Can the minister please provide some reassurance to myself, as well as members of my community and these critical training organizations, that they will not be hurt by the proposed cuts by the feds?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I wish I could give the member that reassurance, but unfortunately I can't. The current federal proposal is to fund their untested, untried Canada jobs program by cutting 60% of funding to the labour market agreement which funds those programs that serve our most vulnerable Ontarians. They're also demanding that the provinces match their funding, which represents a combined hit to Ontario's training programs of \$232 million.

The community groups ought to be concerned about this federal proposal, as should all Canadians. The federal government is asking us to fund their new program at the expense of programs for literacy and basic skills, aboriginal workers, people with disabilities, youth, newcomers and older workers.

The member can reassure his constituents that this government will not support any program that is funded on the backs of marginalized workers. We will stand up for them and ensure that our training programs are available to all Ontarians—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Although I appreciate the ministerial update, I am disappointed to hear that the federal government intends to cut program funding for our most vulnerable workers, regardless of the impact to small business owners. Perhaps this is another example of a hard-right turn that Canada can do without, but I'm pleased that our government is standing up for those Ontarians who need training. As parliamentarians, we have an obligation, duty and responsibility to make sure that no one gets left behind.

I've also heard concerns from small and medium-sized businesses within my own riding. The fact is, these organizations are creating the bulk of new jobs in our economy. We want to make sure that any programs proposed to help businesses with worker training are not ignored by the proposed fed cuts.

Can the minister advise this House what is being done to ensure small and medium-sized businesses that they will not be neglected by the Canada Job Grant proposals?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member raises a very important point. The federal government's Canada Job

Grant proposal has not been well thought out. The original proposal ignored the needs of small businesses. It failed to recognize that most small businesses would not be able to afford to participate in a program that would require them to invest \$5,000 up front in training a new worker.

Ontario and the other provinces and territories, as well as our Ontario Chamber of Commerce, have been very vocal on this. While the federal government has indicated that they would provide some greater flexibility in the program to address our concerns, we're of the view that they need to go further to make this program effective.

We need to do everything we can to help small businesses succeed. That includes getting Bill 105 approved and passed by January 1, so that 60,000 small businesses in Ontario can get the tax break that they deserve. I urge the opposition parties to co-operate, stop stalling this important bill and join us in supporting Ontario's small businesses.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, and I see he hasn't gotten the job grant right, either.

Minister, I understand you are now going to consult with barbers and hairstylists. My understanding is, your enforcement thugs will no longer be harassing barbers for a while. Now that's amazing, because you said they were a self-regulating body; they were standing alone, and you wouldn't be interfering when some messy situation came up like this embarrassment to you with the barbers and the hairdressers.

So can you explain why your government didn't consult with tradespeople before you implemented your nanny-state College of Trades? And by tradespeople, I don't mean Pat Dillon and the Working Families coalition; I mean the tradespeople in Ontario. You never consulted with them. Why didn't you?

Interjections.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I can probably see why, but unlike the member opposite, I have a great deal of confidence in my barber. He's been cutting my hair for over 40 years. I think he does a good job.

I don't only have confidence, as we all do, in our barbers, in their ability to do the work that they do; I also have confidence in their judgment. I believe, like all skilled tradespeople—and barbers are skilled tradespersons—that they know better than the member opposite what's best for them and how they should be categorized in terms of their trade. Should they be a separate barber trade? Should they be under stylists, which is something that the PC Party did when they were in office, when they categorized all of the barbers, the hairstylists and the

hairdressers together? I daresay I don't know what kind of consultation was held then; probably not a lot.

We're reaching out to barbers across this province to let them have a voice in how their trade is going to be governed. I don't know for the life of me what the member has—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I know this is humiliating to you. It's an embarrassment. I really feel happy that you like your barber; that's a great thing—because my hairdresser, the guy that I get my hair cut by, they don't like you at all; they don't like you at all.

Minister, you have to know by now that the Ontario—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All right. Get it all out. Get it all out.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Don't set it up that easy.

All right. Could you please finish your supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you very much. I know I've got nice hair, okay? But not as nice as Frank Klees's hair.

But you have to know that the Ontario College of Trades is a complete disaster. At a time when we are trying to create jobs in this province, the Ontario College of Trades is actually driving jobs away. The ratio review is severely flawed, and in fact, your Liberal cabinet has only approved one ratio review, not all the ones you're bragging about each week.

This expensive tax is simply not working. Will you agree with Tim Hudak and the PC caucus that the Ontario College of Trades should be abolished once and for all?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I will put my barber, John Spanos in Scarborough, up against the member's hairstylist any time. I'll go toe to toe. I'll invite the member out to Scarborough, and at Bellamy and Ellesmere, he can get himself a great haircut by a barber who's been cutting hair for over 50 years.

The member mentioned—I don't know if I could continue with this answer. The member mentioned ratios. Look, our record on ratios was that we reduced seven. When the member's party was in office, in eight years, they reduced none. The College of Trades has produced 14 more ratio reductions than all three parties put together over the last 20 years. I'll not only put my barber up against his hairstylist; I'll put our record on reducing ratios up against his any time.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

New question.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Jonah Schein: My question is to the Premier. Premier, people who go to work each day in this province deserve fair compensation. Unfortunately, thousands of young people in Ontario work for no pay. They receive no compensation and they have few rights or protections in their workplace. Despite clear rules regarding unpaid internships, most of these workers are reluctant to speak up and risk being blacklisted by their employers. The current complaint-based system is unfair and it's ineffective. When will the Liberal government do its job and proactively enforce the law on unpaid internships?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question from the member for Davenport. It's very important to me that we make sure that interns in these situations are fairly treated. I think it's a very good issue to raise.

As far as health and safety for interns, all workers in Ontario should be covered by the Occupational Health and Safety Act. We're currently looking at including co-op students working through accredited university and college programs under Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act.

In terms of the Employment Standards Act, the rules on internships are very clear. While most workers in Ontario are covered by the Employment Standards Act, there's a narrow exemption for co-op students, and this exemption is only for accredited university and college programs to give their students a valuable opportunity for workplace experience while they're pursuing their degree.

We believe that covers the situation, but as I say, we're acting on including co-op students under health and safety. It's a very important issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Back to the Premier: You're not covering the situation. Often the best that most workers in these situations can hope for is a letter of reference that will help them get a paid job in the future. But, Speaker, vulnerable workers should not be forced to choose between their rights at work or a letter of reference. Enforcing the law should be responsibility of the Ontario government and not the responsibility of vulnerable young workers. This is the issue, this is what's critical here, and the solution is clear. When will this government do the hard work, admit that their complaints-based system does not work for unpaid interns and start to proactively enforce the law?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I say, there's only an exemption for some students who are involved with university and college degrees. It's the responsibility of the university or the college to ensure that the placements are fulfilling their mandate.

If there is a situation where a worker in Ontario feels that their rights are being violated, they can—and should—get in touch with the Ministry of Labour, be-

cause we are very clear that that enforcement should be in place.

We are acting on making sure that co-op students are included under the workplace safety act. As I say, I think it's important that we pursue this issue, that we make sure that there aren't other loopholes. We will continue to work with anyone, including the opposition, who wants to ensure that we have those gaps closed and we make sure that all workers in Ontario are safe.

BIODIVERSITY

Mr. Steven Del Duca: My question today is for the Minister of Natural Resources. In Ontario, we are fortunate to have a diverse natural landscape with an abundance of biodiversity and wildlife.

On October 21, I was delighted to attend and participate in an announcement that the minister made in my riding of Vaughan, at the Earth Rangers Centre, about the Land Stewardship and Habitat Restoration Program. I know that MNR announced this program earlier this year to support local projects across Ontario that help to conserve our province's rich biodiversity. The program provides funding so that community groups can support local land stewardship initiatives and projects that enhance biodiversity and wildlife habitat. Could the minister please explain to the House how this Land Stewardship and Habitat Restoration Program is helping to protect the biodiversity of our province?

Hon. David Orazietti: I want to thank my colleague for the question, and I appreciated the opportunity to make this announcement with him last week in his riding. The residents of Vaughan are certainly fortunate to have a capable representative.

As he mentioned, the Land Stewardship and Habitat Restoration Program will provide funding to projects that conserve Ontario's biodiversity. The program builds on our government's ongoing commitment to protect and conserve our biodiversity and to maintain healthy and sustainable habitats right across the province.

Recently, we announced that our ministry will be contributing \$300,000 in funding 24 partnership projects focused on land restoration, rehabilitation and enhancement efforts. Together these projects will help restore more than a 1,000 hectares of important habitat right across the province. Protecting the environment will enhance the quality of life for Ontario families and ensure a dynamic economy for future generations. This project is part of our government's plan to invest in people and infrastructure and build a strong business climate.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I thank the minister for explaining to the House about this particular funding. This is indeed a great initiative, and I was excited to hear that a group in my riding, Earth Rangers, received a grant from the ministry. With the support provided by the ministry, the Earth Rangers Foundation will be able to carry out Project iRestore, which is an important project

that will restore the fields around their headquarters that have been overrun with invasive species.

Peter Kendall, executive director of Earth Rangers, had this to say: "Project iRestore is working to restore ... what was primarily invasive plant species into native tall grass prairie habitat. Funding from" the ministry "will ensure we can continue this important work and see more biodiversity return to this area."

Could the minister please tell the House about some of the other great projects that will be receiving funding under the LSHRP?

Hon. David Orazietti: Again, thanks to the member for the question. I certainly appreciate the opportunity to let members know a little bit about the great projects that local residents are working on to protect animals, plants, forests and wetlands in their own communities right across the province.

I want to point out that the 24 projects being funded this year will engage close to 80 partners and leverage an additional minimum \$300,000 from other community partners and funding sources, making this truly a community-based initiative.

These community groups will bring great value to these projects through their knowledge of local issues, work experience in their communities and the established relationships that they have with local landowners.

The member mentioned Earth Rangers, which is a group carrying out an important project in Vaughan, just one of the many projects. The Credit Valley Conservation Foundation will rehabilitate damaged sections of a cold-water tributary to enhance the existing brook trout population in the Thunder Bay area. The Bright Lake Association will also work with farmers in the Algoma region to help rehabilitate more than 17 types of fish species.

This is just one important investment our government is making to help strengthen our biodiversity.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Premier: Premier, 15 years ago, I fought to get slots at the Fort Erie Race Track. I did so because the track faced closure, and it gave them a 15-year lease on life. It helped to preserve and enhance hundreds of jobs at Fort Erie Race Track and hundreds more in the broader community.

The Liberal government decided, basically in the dark of night, to rip out the slots, supported by your NDP, who drove the getaway car. As a result, that track is spiralling towards closure.

I wrote to you a week ago and I said that I have a three-point plan, actually, to save the Fort Erie Race Track and give some economic stability and opportunity to the people who work in that sector. It results in restoring the slots; forming a public-private partnership with an operator who knows how to run the business; and local revenue sharing.

You haven't responded to my letter yet or asked for me to discuss it. If you want to steal the plan, steal it, but,

please, do something. Will you follow the PC plan and restore the slots at Fort Erie Race Track to save those jobs?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No, we won't, because the plan that the Leader of the Opposition has acknowledged he fought to put in place was not accountable, it was not transparent and it had to be changed. We made a decision that we would change it.

At the same time, we have put in place a five-year plan with \$400 million attached to it, that will allow horse racing in this province to be sustainable, including, if the Fort Erie Race Track chooses to, to work with the Ontario Racing Commission and to establish their future. There is absolutely no reason that the Fort Erie Race Track shouldn't be able to have a sustainable future if they work with the ORC.

My hope would be that the Leader of the Opposition would work with the folks in Fort Erie, would encourage them to work with the ORC and put in place a plan that would be transparent and that would focus on the customers and on the industry. I hope he'll work on that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, Premier, I am working with the folks at Fort Erie. I was there yesterday. I'll tell you, they like our plan, and they say the Liberal-NDP plan is going to close down that racetrack.

You've got to make a decision and you've got to make it now. I think you know, as I heard from Ben Vander Meer yesterday when I was at his farm, that they need to make a decision now about where they're going to race next year. If the track has closed, if it has no future, they'll pick up stakes; they'll lay people off; they'll eliminate jobs; they'll move to the States or elsewhere. That's what's at stake here.

You, in the dark of night, ripped out the slots. You've decided that if a program had a flat tire—if a car had a flat tire—you would junk it entirely. It's going to cost us tens of thousands of jobs. My colleague from Perth-Wellington, Randy Pettapiece, has a plan that will actually give the sector a better future. That should give it some stability and make it a world-class jurisdiction.

Why are you so hell-bent on closing down the race-track and rejecting any idea that's going to save jobs? I'm on the side of jobs; I'm on the side of saving the track. Why aren't you?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm on the side of jobs, and I'm on the side of an accountable and sustainable horse racing industry in this province.

I would encourage—

Applause.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Okay, sit down.

I would encourage the Leader of the Opposition to have a conversation with John Snobelen, who has worked very closely with us. He has been part of the panel that has worked with us to put in place a five-year plan that will lead to that sustainable horse racing industry.

It's very unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition, for purely political reasons—and we all know what those are, as it's transparently political—has stirred the pot in terms of encouraging the people at Fort Erie to suggest that they don't have a future. That is just not true. If they work with the ORC, they have a future, and he should help them to do that.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier.

The Premier wants to cut her way to sustainability. She is cutting jobs in rural Ontario because she thinks the only way to save thoroughbred racing in our province is to thin the field down to one private operator: Woodbine. But she also says the Slots at Racetracks Program had to go because Woodbine used a pile of purse money to stuff the wallets of their executives.

The government audited Ontario's racetracks. If the Premier isn't picking winners, why won't she make those audits public?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've answered this question a number of times. I think the leader of the third party knows that those audits were done with the understanding that they were confidential, in order to work towards a transition plan for the tracks in the province.

If the leader of the third party thinks that there shouldn't have been work done to create transition plans so that we could have a plan going forward, well, that's one thing. But if she thinks that we needed to have a plan going forward, then it only makes sense that we would have worked with the tracks, that we would have had those audits. The Auditor General is looking at the situation now, and she will release a report.

The fact is that those discussions with those audits with the tracks were done as confidential audits in order to put a transition plan in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier likes to brand her government as open and transparent. I guess transparency is only of value when it's convenient for the Premier.

She is asking Ontario horse people and track workers to trust her and not to ask too many questions. But people are losing their livelihoods in communities like Fort Erie, and they deserve some answers.

Before the Premier closes down the Fort Erie Race Track and other tracks across the province, will she pony up the results of government audits so we can see just how much horse money went to executive compensation and perks at Woodbine?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the leader of the third party will read the Auditor General's report when it's released.

Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting that the leader of the third party seems so interested in the health and stability of the horse racing industry and yet did not support the appointment of a former NDP agriculture minister to lead the Ontario Racing Commission. It is beyond understanding why they would not have supported the appointment of Elmer Buchanan, given that he has such a deep knowledge of the sector and that he has worked on putting a sustainability plan in place. It says to me that the leader of the third party is not interested in a sustainable plan, but is actually more interested in political gain on this, which I think is shameful.

We want a sustainable industry. That's why we've worked—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is to the Minister of Transportation.

This past Thursday, second reading on my private member's bill carried. Bill 116, the Manoranjana Kanagasabapathy Act, was introduced to address the number of drivers who disregard the law and still continue to use a hand-held device while driving, despite the fact that it is illegal. My bill will increase the fines for distracted driving and assign three demerit points to offenders.

Speaker, distracted driving is responsible for causing more than 20% of vehicle road accidents in Ontario. As legislators, it is our responsibility to review the current laws regarding distracted drivers and strengthen them to ensure that the fines and penalties in place deter drivers from using any hand-held device while driving.

1130

I know the government has a lengthy history of taking action on making our roads safer. Can the minister tell us about these steps but also if he supports the initiative in my bill?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank my colleague and my friend from Scarborough—Rouge River for his very solid leadership on this issue, Mr. Speaker.

I just came from spending the morning with Chief Blair and the volunteers of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, which is a really remarkable leader, with incredible integrity.

The success of our drunk driving laws have brought fatalities down to where we're almost 50% less than the Canadian average, and they have dropped from 227 deaths to 160, but distracted driving losses have gone up by 65. That's 65 families who have lost a father, a mum, a child, and that's devastating. We need to look to the success of things like drunk driving laws and apply those lessons to distracted driving.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm glad to hear that our government is taking the problem of distracted driving seriously. Initiatives taken by our government have made our roads safer, much more than many other jurisdictions in North America, but we all know that there's more that can be done. There have been too many innocent lives lost because someone else feels that their text message or phone call is more important than focusing on the road.

It is also reassuring that the minister supports my bill and that he identified that it is important to take action now on making our roads safer and penalize those who break the law. But we need to take action on this issue now.

Can the minister tell us some of the measures his ministry is working on and what new action we can expect from this government?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to commend the member on his private member's bill. This is really an excellent step forward.

Mr. Speaker, it's great that we have young people in the audience today, because they are often the victims of distracted driving and drunk driving. I was just with several mums who have lost to that, and one of the things they raised with me was that we've done it on drunk driving and now we've got to do it on distracted driving. That's a mixture—I know the Canadian Automobile Association is here. I want to thank them and recognize them in the gallery, because they are running some of the best education programs on distracted and drunk driving.

We need to increase both our regulations and penalties, and we're reviewing the law right now. I know there are members opposite, as well, from Nepean—Carleton and other constituencies, who have also been in support of this. We will be bringing forward an action plan considering legislation and regulations, as well as education, in the very near future.

DRIVE CLEAN

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of the Environment today. Now, Minister, I have repeatedly asked you in this House if you're going to pay back the money that the Liberal government stole from Ontario drivers using the Drive Clean—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Withdraw, please.

Mr. Michael Harris: Withdraw—took from Ontario drivers using the Drive Clean program, and every time you avoid my question, saying you will potentially stop stealing money—or taking money, rather—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know what I'm doing. Withdraw.

Mr. Michael Harris: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ask the question.

Mr. Michael Harris: —potentially stop taking money in a few months from now. Minister, that's not good enough. The Supreme Court ruled that profits made off revenue-neutral programs are illegal, and they must be

paid back. That means you owe Ontario drivers \$19 million. Minister, will you commit today to repay the money you illegally took from Ontario drivers, or will—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. I'm loath to miss any question, but if the member wants to go down that road, I have warned him to make sure that he's perfectly clear that if he goes down that road, I will pass the question.

Finish the question; you've got 10 seconds.

Mr. Michael Harris: Will you agree to pay back Ontario monies today, or will it take a lawsuit filed in court to get the money back?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has already indicated that the program will be made revenue-neutral. You will know that it was, of course, in deficit for at least the first decade.

But, you know, it's interesting that you ask this question on the day when all of us are wearing a pin which deals with those who suffer from lung cancer, because the Ontario Lung Association says that there are problems: "These pollutants cause breathing difficulties, irritated eyes, coughing and headaches. They also trigger asthma attacks, worsen symptoms in people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and contribute to other serious health problems including heart disease and cancer."

This is a program which the Ontario Lung Association and the medical community indicate tremendous support for. It's one that saves lives—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Harris: Again to the minister. Minister, your answers prove you will stop at nothing to defend this temporary program which the vast majority of Ontarians oppose. And now even the Toronto Star—you heard that right; the Toronto Star—has adopted our position to scrap Drive Clean. So clearly you're on the wrong side of this issue.

Minister, there's time to save face here. You can do that today by committing to Ontarians that you will meet the demands of the Ontario PC Party and our leader, Tim Hudak, which we made more than two years ago, to get rid of Drive Clean. Minister, will you back down from your unreasonable defence of this useless program today and commit to scrapping Drive Clean?

Hon. James J. Bradley: First of all, I must call into question—here we have history in this Legislature. We have a member of the Conservative Party quoting what you usually refer to as the red Star. I simply can't believe that you would be doing so.

But let me quote someone who's very credible on this issue, Gord Miller, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario: "The Drive Clean program has undergone a number of independent program reviews that concluded significant reductions in smog-causing pollutants were being achieved, but that further reductions could result from program improvements, including the implementation of on-board diagnostic emissions testing which is

currently underway." That's the highly reputable—and one who has been supported by all in the Legislature—Gord Miller, Environmental Commissioner of the province of Ontario.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. This government has been sitting on a falls prevention safety strategy since 2010. It is now 2013 and still we are hearing from this government that consultation is ongoing and something will be coming soon. In Newfoundland and Labrador the provincial government reviewed its health and safety regulations in 2009. The result: By 2012 falls from heights were reduced 25%. There are nearly 3,500 serious falls on the job each year in Ontario. A 25% reduction would mean 800 fewer serious workplace falls. I ask the Premier: When does this government expect the heights training regulation to come into force?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very glad that the member opposite has asked this question. I know that the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities actually has some information. But what I will say is that we want very much to make sure that this program is in place. We think it's very important that we do everything we can. It's absolutely consistent with prevention of illness, prevention of injury, that we know is in the best interests, obviously, of individuals, but is also in the best interests of workplaces and of the health care system. I'm glad that the member opposite asked this question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Catherine Fife: To the Premier: Last week this House heard that nine workers have fallen and died on construction sites across Ontario since June of this year, and yet your Minister of Labour cannot tell us when the training standard to prevent falling on job sites that, which was drafted and endorsed by the former Minister of Labour three years ago, will be in place. Last week I spoke to Tom Beegan, the former chief prevention officer for the province of Ontario. His opinion on the matter? There's no reason for this standard not to be in place today. When will this government do what it claims is its number one priority, enact the fall prevention regulation and put worker safety first?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm sure the Minister of Labour would be able to provide more specifics to the member, but I know the Minister of Labour and his ministry have been working very hard when it comes to falls prevention. In fact, I think just recently they've been out in workplaces right across the province on an action plan to reduce falls, to be out there and try to enforce it in a way that really has been effective.

But, Mr. Speaker, any tragedy in the workplace is one tragedy too many. It's something we take very seriously. It's the reason we've brought forward many preventative

measures that have helped reduce workplace injuries to a level that's far lower than it was when we took office. It's something that's incredibly important to us.

I thank the member for raising the issue. It's a very important issue, and I know that the Minister of Labour is on it.

VISITORS

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'd just like to take a moment to welcome food pioneer and executive director of Food-Share Debbie Field to the Legislature. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the members' west gallery, we have someone who has represented Beaches–Woodbine in the 35th and 36th Parliaments and Beaches–East York in the 37th Parliament: Madame Frances Lankin.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stole your thunder.

DEFERRED VOTES

LOCAL FOOD ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES ALIMENTS LOCAUX

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 and to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to provide for a tax credit to farmers for donating certain agricultural products that they have produced / Projet de loi 36, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur les aliments locaux et modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour prévoir un crédit d'impôt pour les agriculteurs qui font don de certains produits agricoles qu'ils ont produits.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1141 to 1146.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On November 4, Mr. McMeekin moved third reading of Bill 36.

All those in favour, rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk, please.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Balkisson, Bas
Barrett, Toby
Bartolucci, Rick
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Campbell, Sarah
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Colle, Mike

Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hatfield, Percy
Hillier, Randy
Holyday, Douglas C.
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Hudak, Tim
Hunter, Mitzie
Jackson, Rod
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff

Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia
Murray, Glen R.
Natyshak, Taras
Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Oraziotti, David
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Piruzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Sattler, Peggy
Schein, Jonah
Scott, Laurie

Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Fraser, John
Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael

Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McDonnell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McMeekin, Ted
McNaughton, Monte
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Milligan, Rob E.
Milloy, John

Sergio, Mario
Shurman, Peter
Singh, Jagmeet
Smith, Todd
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhar, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 101; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1150 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have great pleasure in introducing to the House this afternoon two long-time friends from Windsor, Al and Alberta Clark. Thank you, and welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guests.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FRANK STRONACH

Mr. Frank Klees: I rise to pay tribute to a great Canadian, an exemplary citizen of this province, a visionary, an entrepreneur, industrialist, philanthropist and a man who personifies the very best of Canadian values. Frank Stronach has touched literally millions of lives through his visionary and courageous entrepreneurial spirit and philanthropic generosity.

Frank Stronach immigrated to Canada in 1954 and, by 1957, had translated his working background in tool and machine engineering into his first company, Multimatic Investments Limited, which would expand into the production of automotive components. That was the beginning of what would become an international business success story that would span 29 countries and provide employment to more than 123,000 people in 314 manufacturing operations.

At the heart of that success was Frank Stronach's management philosophy, known as "Fair Enterprise," that is enshrined in a business charter of rights that sets out annual profit sharing between employees, management, investors and society.

Among the many honours that have been bestowed on Frank Stronach are the Order of Canada, the Business Leader of the Year award presented by the Richard Ivey School of Business, and the Fraser Institute's highest honour, the T. Patrick Boyle Founder's Award, in recognition of excellence and accomplishment in the promotion of entrepreneurship, philanthropy and free-market ideas.

Interwoven in this extraordinary life is a personal commitment to never forget those less fortunate. Untold lives have been touched through Frank Stronach's personal benevolence and the generosity of Magna International to a wide range of charitable and community organizations. One of those organizations is Big Brothers Big Sisters of York, who are honouring Frank Stronach at his 100 years of mentoring celebration.

Speaker, I ask all members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating Big Brothers Big Sisters of York and to thank Frank Stronach for making a difference in the lives of so many, yes, as a Big Brother, and as a visionary leader whose legacy will be celebrated for generations to come.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Earlier this week, the Toronto Star reported on the failure of the federal government to act on climate change. Unfortunately, the Harper Conservative government isn't the only one to fall short on its climate responsibilities. Ontario's Liberal government is Failing our Future, according to the Environment Commissioner's 2013 report.

I'll just read an excerpt. He comments: "As in past years the prognosis is bleak"—referring to further action. "There has been no improvement in the emissions from the three biggest sectors (transportation, industry and buildings) since the climate change action plan began in 2007. We have only a slim chance of meeting the government's 2014 target ... and no chance at all to meet the subsequent targets for 2020 and 2050 unless something markedly changes."

Speaker, climate change is already affecting our lives. It is irresponsible for the federal and Ontario governments to be failing their responsibilities.

VETERANS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise in the House today to acknowledge the 12th Annual Veterans Appreciation Luncheon and to thank Kristin and David Courtney, owners of MEDichair Halton, for hosting and inviting me to attend. They know first-hand the devastating effect that a life-changing injury or disability can cause. Their passion for helping others came about after witnessing how the life of their friend was positively transformed by

the many medical devices he needed following a horrific motor vehicle accident.

MEDichair Halton was the recipient of the 2011 Oakville Award for Business Excellence in Professional Services. It has been providing home health care solutions to residents in Oakville, Burlington and Milton, along with many other areas in the Halton and Peel regions, since 1994.

It was an honour to attend their luncheon to recognize local veterans. We took a moment to recognize and honour the hundreds and thousands of Canadians who made the greatest sacrifice for our country. They may have served in the First or the Second World War, the Korean War, Afghanistan, or many other places. These Canadians made a conscious decision to volunteer their lives to be a part of our country's military. I would like to thank them for their service to our country, for enduring what they endured, and for being there when we needed them most.

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to bring awareness to an issue that has been very important to me and particularly to one of my constituents, namely Rick Levesque, who has started a campaign to bring demerit points to your licence if you are caught in distracted driving.

Earlier today, I had the opportunity, which I believe is a rare moment in this assembly, where I was able to co-host a press conference with Liberal MPP Bas Balkissoon, as well as my colleague Jeffrey Yurek from the London area. The three of us were able to work with not only Rick Levesque but also CAA, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Trillium Automobile Dealers Association and so many other Ontarians who are concerned about distracted driving, which is causing lives to be lost in Ontario and many cars and vehicles to be destroyed, and is a growing concern on our highways. It was a pleasure today, and I'm looking forward for this initiative to be brought forward by the Minister of Transportation, who I will give credit to for saying that he does see that this is an area of concern and one that we can work on.

So, Speaker, if I could impart upon this assembly one final time my support for Mr. Balkissoon's initiative, but even one step further: I think that we can act, and we can act firmly now, and I would encourage the government to bring forward either regulation or legislation on distracted driving immediately.

STEEL INDUSTRY

Miss Monique Taylor: My home city of Hamilton has a long history of steel production. Thousands upon thousands have brought up their families and put their kids through school thanks to the good wages they managed to negotiate through their own hard work and through collective action with their colleagues. The United Steelworkers and their members have served Hamilton well over the years.

Unfortunately, those workers have been let down as US Steel announced last week that there will be no more steel production at the Hamilton plant. US Steel struck a deal with Investment Canada in 2007 that would allow them to buy Stelco. That deal included promises of investments and jobs that would secure a future for steel production in Steeltown. Last week, we saw yet more evidence that those promises mean absolutely nothing.

Last Tuesday was a sad day for Hamilton, and workers are rightly worried about what the future holds for them, not just for those who are still working at US Steel but also the 8,000 retirees who deferred some of their pay for decades to ensure that they had a decent pension when they retired. Now they're not so sure, and with good reason. I've also heard from a number of their widows, with the same concerns.

I'm pleased to hear that the city of Hamilton council is reviving its steel committee to take a good, hard look at what is happening in Canada's steel industry. I wish them every success and offer my services if I can be of assistance.

EMERGING LEADERS NETWORK

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: This past weekend, I had the pleasure of attending CivicAction's Emerging Leaders Network studio conference. It was so great to be back amongst my peers at CivicAction discussing a topic that is a priority for me and my constituents of Scarborough-Guildwood: how to improve jobs and the economy in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

The Emerging Leaders Network studio conference has been running for the last five years and brings together our region's young and rising leaders to develop new ideas and incubate concrete actions. Incredible past projects born out of ELN conferences include Toronto Homecoming, which connects top talent that has gone abroad—we're trying to attract them back home here to Canada and the GTA; Project Neutral, which is committed to enabling a neighbourhood in Toronto to become carbon neutral; and the Pan Am Path, which is a city-wide project whose goal is to create an active-living and community-building legacy for Toronto's Pan Am/Parapan Am Games. The Pan Am Path will weave through my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood and undertake improvements in our Kingston-Galloway neighbourhood.

1510

We know that young people and their successes are big drivers of our economy and our growth. That's why it's so stimulating to be among our conferences' many young leaders at the ELN Studio conference, who are passionate and dedicated to improving the economic future of the GTA. I can't wait to see what brilliant initiatives stem from the work that they did this past weekend.

TOBACCO CONTROL

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Illegal contraband tobacco products are easily accessible in my riding of Nipissing and,

indeed, in many other areas of Ontario. The RCMP recently estimated there are 50 contraband tobacco manufacturers operating in Ontario and Quebec. Moreover, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation estimates federal and provincial governments lose up to \$1.1 billion a year in tax revenue from contraband tobacco sales each year.

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes, you could build a gas plant or two with that.

City council in North Bay has recognized this is a great concern. In a January 2012 resolution, they noted that 42% of smokers in northern Ontario purchased cigarettes from an outlet not paying full taxes in the past six months. And 53% of grade-7-to-grade-12 students who smoke say they smoked contraband cigarettes in the past year.

The North Bay council resolution was directed at health and finance ministers and encouraged those ministries to "maintain a strong focus on tobacco control and to work with local law enforcement agencies in this regard."

The lack of will by this government when it comes to enforcement is hurting us all. It hurts retailers, it hurts our finances, but it also hurts our kids and their health, and that in itself is shameful.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm rising today to make a plea on behalf of my riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan—actually, on behalf of all of Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario—relative to the Pan Am Games.

I know that the Pan Am Games are in 2015. It's closing in fast. They will be on us before we know it. I know it's going to be fantastic for the people in southern Ontario. There's going to be a tremendous legacy down here from the facilities that are created for their athletes in the GTA—for all Ontario athletes at some level, obviously.

What I want to say is that it's my understanding that as part of the Pan American Games, there is going to be a torch relay of some description. I'm sure the people involved in making these decisions are hunkered down as we speak, trying to decide on that route. What I'm here to say is that even though we can't be part of the legacy when it comes to the physical facilities of the Pan Am Games, it's my hope that that group of people is going to find a way to see that torch find its way to Thunder Bay or somewhere in northwestern Ontario. That will be our legacy.

Thunder Bay has got a tremendous reputation when it comes to putting athletes at the professional levels of a variety of different sports in a tremendous way. We've got a great volunteer base when it comes to hosting just about anything. This is my plea to the Pan Am Games folks on behalf of the people of Thunder Bay-Atikokan, Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario generally: Find a way to bring that torch from the Pan Am Games through Thunder Bay before it finishes here in Toronto in the summer of 2015.

CANADIAN AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise today and congratulate the Canadian Automobile Association for 100 years of service and advocacy on behalf of Canadian drivers. They hosted a wonderful luncheon this afternoon that many of the members in this House actually attended.

The founding meeting of what is known as the Canadian Automobile Association, CAA, took place in the offices of the Ontario Motor League in Toronto back on September 3, 1913. Their founder, Dr. Perry E. Doolittle, envisioned the expanding role of the motor vehicle and realized just how important it would be in Canadian life. He was a key player in the building of the Trans-Canada Highway.

CAA's advocacy efforts include initiatives like School Safety Patrol, Worst Roads, CAA's Traffic Safety Coalition and much more.

I've personally been a member of the CAA for over 30 years now. It was due to my father, who actually got me involved in it as well. Now my wife and children also have CAA memberships. As a husband and a father, nothing is more important to me than the safety and security of my children; while my children are grown now, and living on their own, the peace of mind CAA provides is incredibly important. Many miles from home, I can rest assured knowing that my family will be taken care of, if the event arises and they do need assistance.

So again, to the CAA, I want to say congratulations on 100 years of service.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated November 5, 2013, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

LUNG CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I rise to recognize November as Lung Cancer Awareness Month in Canada. It's an opportunity to raise awareness of this very serious form of cancer.

I'd like to acknowledge some people who are in the House today. Anne Marie Cerato is a young woman who

is on the Lung Cancer Canada board, and she is living with lung cancer. Geoff Ogram is with us; Geoff is also on the board of Lung Cancer Canada, and also living with lung cancer. Geoff's wife Dawn is here; Dawn is a former proud OPSer, and she is here in her capacity supporting her husband. Shem Singh and Christina Sit are both here with us today; they are both with Lung Cancer Canada. Welcome, all.

My heartfelt thanks go out to the dedicated staff and volunteers of organizations like the Canadian Cancer Society, the Ontario Lung Association and Lung Cancer Canada for their ongoing commitment to battle cancer. Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer-related deaths for both men and women in our country. On average, every day 55 Canadians die of lung cancer. This means that this year an estimated 3,600 men and 3,300 women in Ontario will die of lung cancer.

That's why we need to do more to help the patients and families affected by this disease and, more importantly, to prevent it. I'm pleased to say that our government and its partners, like the Ontario Lung Health Alliance, are making progress in the fight against lung disease.

We know that smoking tobacco is a leading cause of lung cancer. Although neither Geoff nor Anne Marie were smokers, and they still have lung cancer, smoking tobacco is a leading cause of lung cancer, and that is why I am firmly committed to our Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy. Our goal is to achieve the lowest smoking rates in the country.

The good news is that smoking rates are down in Ontario. In the year 2000, 24.5% of us smoked, and now we're at 19%. The government has already taken concrete steps to help more people quit smoking, and to make sure young people don't get addicted to cigarettes.

I'm proud to say that Ontario is a leader in Canada when it comes to tobacco control. In addition to increased school-based and youth-led prevention efforts, in 2006 we banned smoking indoors in workplaces and in enclosed public spaces. Two years later, we banned the display of tobacco products on retail "power walls" across Ontario. In 2009, we banned smoking in motor vehicles when children are present. And in 2010 we banned the sale of flavoured cigarillos.

We now fund smoking cessation drugs, and we've expanded access to nicotine replacement therapies to family health teams, community health centres and aboriginal health access centres, as well as to patients in treatment for addictions. Forty-six community health centres, 132 family health teams and 14 addiction treatment centres across Ontario now provide over-the-counter nicotine replacement therapy and cessation counselling at no cost to smokers.

1520

Earlier this year, to build on our supports for smokers who are ready to quit, I announced that we're launching two new, innovative smoking-cessation initiatives in collaboration with community, workplace and health care partners. The first is a partnership with 25 employers,

aimed at reducing smoking among workers in the industrial and service sectors. We continue to work with 19 public health units and employers across Ontario to develop and implement an approach to quitting smoking. This includes specific strategies to enhance tobacco-use cessation, such as adopting smoke-free-worksites policies and compliance strategies. To support the workers in their attempts to quit smoking, both the Smokers' Helpline and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health provide access to counselling and no-cost nicotine replacement therapy.

The second project helps patients who are in hospital to quit smoking, using strategies such as brief and intensive counselling. Our government is providing nearly \$2 million for this program over two years, to improve care for patients with chronic conditions such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder, lung cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes. We also want to strengthen the links among hospitals and the supports available to patients after they're discharged, including primary care, public health, community pharmacies and the Smokers' Helpline.

To build on our measures to create smoke-free communities, we've started to take aim at so-called social smokers, targeting mostly young adults who believe that if they're only occasional smokers, they're not damaging their health. Some of you have seen our government's social media campaign to raise awareness about the dangers of social smoking. In Ontario, smoking prevalence is higher among young people age 20 to 29 than in any other age group, yet many don't even consider themselves to be smokers. However, research indicates that a majority of so-called social smokers will become regular smokers. That's why we need to reach them.

Speaker, I'm also pleased to note what our government is doing to clean our air, which has a significant impact on improving the health and well-being of Ontarians, young and old. We remain committed to closing all coal-fired plants by 2014. Just the other week, Minister Chiarelli announced the closure of the Lambton generating station by the end of this year, leaving only one coal-fired generator online. When we finally close the Nanticoke generating station next year, we will have closed 19 coal-fired power plants across Ontario. That's progress for our air, our lungs and our environment.

On the treatment side, I'm proud to say that according to the International Cancer Benchmarking Partnership, our province ranks among the best jurisdictions with comparable health systems when it comes to cancer survival rates for major cancers, including lung cancer.

I'd like to thank our partners at Cancer Care Ontario for driving quality, accountability and innovation in all cancer-related services.

As we mark Lung Cancer Awareness Month, we should reach out and thank the dedicated physicians, nurses, medical radiation technologists and all the other health care providers who work hard every day keeping Ontarians healthy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: As we've heard, November represents Lung Cancer Awareness Month.

Mr. Speaker, one in 12 Canadians will develop lung cancer in their lifetime. More Canadians will develop lung cancer than any other type of cancer. There are approximately 24,000 Canadians who are diagnosed with lung cancer each year, with roughly 20,600 Canadians dying from the disease.

Initiatives by organizations such as Lung Cancer Canada, the National Cancer Institute, Cancer Care Ontario, the Lung Association and the Canadian Cancer Society are using various education tools to increase awareness.

Studies show that smoking is the leading cause of lung cancer in Canada. The second-leading cause of lung cancer is radon, followed by second-hand smoke, asbestos and occupational exposures to cancer-causing chemicals.

As I've said, the leading cause of lung cancer is smoking, which is responsible for 30% of all lung cancer cases. Organizations focus on educating Ontarians about the dangers of smoking and the direct link to cancer, as well as the long-term benefits of quitting. Studies show that within 10 years of quitting smoking, an individual's risk of dying from lung cancer is cut in half.

Through online and print help manuals, labeling on packaging as well as social media, more Ontarians are quitting smoking because of the long-term risk of developing lung cancer. The many organizations that are working to raise awareness to lung cancer offer helplines to those trying to quit.

The second-leading cause of lung cancer is radon exposure, accounting for roughly 16% of lung cancer cases. This is something that I don't think is very well known by Ontarians or Canadians, Mr. Speaker.

Health Canada research has indicated that there are hundreds more cases each year of lung cancer linked to indoor radon exposure since the 1970s. Organizations, including Health Canada, continue to encourage Ontarians and Canadians to check levels of this colourless and odourless gas in their homes. Scientists are finding that Canadians are at a greater risk of higher-than-acceptable levels of radon in their homes.

Health Canada recommends that homes be tested for a minimum of three months, ideally during the winter months, to determine if there are unhealthy radon levels in the home. Ontarians can purchase an inexpensive at-home radon detection kit from their local hardware store or hire professionals to test the levels in their home. We would encourage all Ontarians to do this inexpensive testing in their homes. If higher-than-normal levels of radon are detected, Health Canada recommends consulting with a professional to find solutions for your home.

Organizations such as Lung Cancer Canada, the National Cancer Institute, Cancer Care Ontario, the Lung Association and the Canadian Cancer Society have made good progress in the last decade. Innovation and discovery in lung cancer diagnoses and treatment are at an all-time high. Advances are being made with targeted drug therapies that offer more effective and less toxic

alternatives to traditional chemotherapy. High-precision radiation treatment, minimally invasive surgery and robotic surgical techniques are just a few examples of the great strides being made in treating lung cancer.

However, despite the great advances being made, the average survival rate for lung cancer is still only five years, so we still have a lot of work to do to continue to educate all Ontarians about lung cancer and the importance of preventative measures, like smoking cessation and testing your home for radon levels.

Throughout the month of November, I encourage all Ontarians to learn more about lung health and the steps that can be taken to prevent lung cancer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I know that I don't usually share time, but I doubt that I'm going to make five minutes on that one, so I beg your indulgence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's fine.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Now we know why you haven't been asking any questions this week.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a cold that doesn't know when to go away.

I certainly would like to welcome the people who made the journey to come and be here as we celebrate this very special month dedicated to lung cancer.

This is a disease that everybody in Ontario knows. We all know someone who has faced the disease, maybe has lost their battle or is still going at it, trying to fight for their life. Make no mistake: For 80% of the people who are diagnosed with lung cancer, the end is very bleak. The end means that you lose your battle and cancer takes another life.

I'm always proud to say that you and I, Speaker, in 2008, introduced a bill to ban flavoured cigarillos. It is almost impossible in Ontario to talk about lung cancer without talking about smoking. You and I got together back in 2008 because we knew that the tobacco industry was seeing the statistics. They were seeing the steps that Ontario had taken to decrease the smoking rate, and they wanted to make sure that the next generation of smokers was going to be addicted. They wanted to make sure that there would be a next generation to buy their tobacco products. And what did they do? They came out with flavoured cigarillos. Now, a young person who's a non-smoker—we all start as non-smokers—will never spend \$8 on a package of cigarettes; \$8 is a lot of money and a package of cigarettes, when you don't smoke, doesn't make much sense. But they would spend a buck; they would spend \$1 so they can look cool and carry a flavoured cigarillo.

1530

For those of you who have never seen them, if you saw them, you would think that, really, they belong in a kid's knapsack. They come in all sorts of fruit flavours, candy flavours and a lot of alcohol flavours—martini etc. They are flavourful. The packages look very much like a fruit roll-up or a lip gloss. But what they are is, they are a way for the tobacco industry to make sure that there will

be a next generation of smokers. They are flavoured tobacco products.

So the bill we introduced in 2008 finally became law and the sale of flavoured cigarillos was banned in this province. Unfortunately, the ink on that bill was not even dry, when the tobacco industry had found a loophole. They had found a way to continue the sale of this product. Which is why, during the month of November—the month dedicated to lung health in many ways—I will be reintroducing a bill that bans flavoured tobacco products, so that what you and I tried to do together will finally be completed. This is an issue that is dear to me.

This summer, while I was back in my riding, I spent a lot of time on baseball diamonds. I saw at least 34 different flavoured tobacco products being used. There was smoking tobacco, just as much as there was smokeless tobacco. If you go to any baseball bench, you will see those little cans of chews that come in all sorts of flavours. Lots of kids start to chew while they are actually trying to do physical activities, while they're actually trying to play ball. Some of them actually do it pretty good; some of them actually play ball very good. But they see all of those chews on the bench and, at some point, they will try one.

Now if it was just chewing tobacco—it tastes horrible. The first time you put this in your mouth, you have one thing on your mind: How can I get this out? But if it's the flavoured one—the bubble gum one, some of the martini one—you can keep that in your mouth for quite a while before you get the yucky taste of tobacco. But what is really happening is that you're getting hooked on nicotine.

It doesn't take long after that and you want the real tobacco, and you move on to the flavoured cigarillo. Then, you don't want the flavouring anymore; you want the cigarettes. And the industry gets its next lung cancer recipient, gets its next person hooked on tobacco.

We can do better. We will do better.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

To the member from Nickel Belt: You got through all five minutes. Congratulations.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and vehicle emissions have declined significantly from 1998 to 2010; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to eliminate the Drive Clean program."

I support this petition, I'm happy to affix my name to it and give it to page Aiden.

ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES

Mr. Michael Mantha: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas these vehicles are as safe as any motorcycle carrying a passenger since all of the manufacturers of the '2-up machines' have redesigned their original models by extending the wheel bases, beefing up their suspension to allow the carriage of passengers on the machine safely and providing a rear seat, many with handholds;

"Whereas the privilege to ride on secondary highways and trails with two people on a recreational vehicle is denied to off-road vehicles (ORV) operators but is granted to snowmobiles;

"Whereas the definition of an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) in regulation 316/03 no longer reflects the majority of ATVs being marketed and sold in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"Amend the definition of an ATV to include those that are: (a) designed to carry a passenger; (b) with more than four tires and designed to carry passengers; (c) without a straddle seat; and (d) carries passengers and has a steering wheel."

I support this petition and will present it to page Anal to bring down to the Clerks.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition here, signed by a number of people from Ontario. It says:

"Whereas small businesses not only employ thousands of Ontarians with well-paying jobs, they also play a vital role strengthening Ontario's economy; and

"Whereas providing tax relief to small and local businesses strengthens the economy and creates a business climate that attracts investment and helps create jobs; and

"Whereas the government has taken several other initiatives to making Ontario the most attractive place to do business in North America;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 105, Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013, intro-

duced on September 24, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Finance."

I agree with this petition, will sign it and will send it down with Sarhan.

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Petitions? The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker; it's better late than never.

"Whereas the net benefit of the retained nuclear scenario is \$60 billion. Forgoing the wind options in the long-term energy plan (LTEP) will have a positive benefit to the economy of \$21 billion. Forgoing the nuclear option in the LTEP will have a negative economic impact of \$38 billion;

"Whereas the Durham region economy is predicated on the new build. It was Premier Wynne who cancelled the new build at Darlington, costing Ontario 20,000 direct and indirect jobs associated with the new build;

"Whereas this severely limits employment opportunities for university graduates from the University of Ontario Institute of Technology who were to gain experience in Darlington nuclear's training centre;

"Whereas in addition to refurbishing the four existing reactors at Darlington the building of new capacity is important for the future of Ontario's manufacturing sector and for jobs and investment in our Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Ontario's elected MPPs and the provincial government reaffirm their commitment to the complete refurbishment of all four units at the Darlington generating station and that the Ontario government reinstate the original plan for the completion of the two new reactors at the Darlington generating station."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and present it to Kate, one of the pages in their last week here at Queen's Park.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Enbridge Canada is proposing to reverse the flow of the Line 9 pipeline in order to transport western oil and tar sands oil through the most densely populated parts of Ontario;

"Whereas this pipeline project proposes changes to the pipeline that merit serious consideration, like the increase in oil carrying capacity and the transport of significantly more corrosive oil through the pipeline;

"Whereas this pipeline passes under cities and major rivers and a spill would risk the drinking water and health of millions of Ontarians and cause permanent damage to ecosystems;

"Whereas Line 9's reversal will have impacts that must be analyzed beyond the National Energy Board hearings held by the federal government;

"Whereas the government of Quebec has already indicated its intention to conduct an independent review of the line reversal impact, including the flow of oil sands crude into Quebec;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario acts in the best interest of the health and environment of the province and conduct a full environmental assessment of Enbridge's proposed Line 9 reversal and capacity expansion projects."

I am proud to affix my signature to this petition, and I will give it to page Evan.

1540

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly signed by a number of people from around the province on the environment. It reads as follows:

"Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone's responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

"Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

"Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Environment."

I agree with this petition, will sign it and will send it down with Louis.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas many residents of Nipissing depended on the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB) to assist with moving expenses, help stay in a current home, assist with utilities and pay overdue rent; and

"Whereas cutting the special diet allowance made it more difficult for many ODSP recipients to achieve a healthy diet;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to restore the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit and special diet allowance."

I agree with this, sign it and give it to page Aiden.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect, and substandard care for patients at our hospitals;

"Whereas there are more and more cases of hospital acquired infections;

"Whereas people with complaints have no independent body to listen to their concerns;

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada—including the three territories—where our Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of hospitals;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand the Ombudsman's mandate to include Ontario's hospitals and other front line care organizations."

I couldn't agree with this more, Mr. Speaker. I will affix my name to it and give it to page Christina to bring to the table.

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr. John Fraser: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone's responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

"Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

"Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Environment."

I fully support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Jack.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. John O'Toole: I have a petition from my riding on Bill 91, which is the Waste Reduction Act. It says:

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees

for agricultural” and off-road tires, increasing fees from \$15 to \$352, a 2,000% increase in some cases; and

“Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces” and in Canada; and

“Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge” a modest fee of up to \$75; and

“Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships” and potential loss to the US market;

“Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Please suspend the” thoughtless “decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship’s fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs.”

I’m pleased to sign and support it, and present it to Sarhan, one of the pages.

TAXATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition which reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the cost of living in northwestern Ontario is significantly higher than other regions of the province due to the high cost of necessities such as hydro, home heating fuel, gasoline and auto insurance; and

“Whereas an increase in the price of any of these essential goods will make it even more difficult for people living in northwestern Ontario to pay their bills and put food on the table;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To reject any proposed increase to the harmonized sales tax, gas tax or any other fees or taxes in the northwest; and instead investigate other means such as increasing corporate tax compliance or eliminating corporate tax loopholes in order to fund transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.”

I support this petition, will affix my signature and give it to page Tristan to deliver to the table.

GOVERNMENT’S RECORD

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a want of confidence motion has been tabled before the Legislative Assembly of Ontario; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario remains in power only while it has the confidence of the assembly; and

“Whereas the debate of a want of confidence motion requires the consent of all three parties’ House leaders; and

“Whereas the recent scandals, including the Ornge air ambulance fiasco, the Mississauga and Oakville power plant cancellation and eHealth have shown Ontarians that the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government cannot be trusted with the administration of our province; and

“Whereas it is evident that the McGuinty-Wynne government has lost the confidence of Ontarians;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately exercise its prime duty of holding the government accountable and bring a want of confidence motion to debate at the earliest opportunity.”

I agree with this motion, sign it and give it to page Phoebe.

ONTARIO RANGER PROGRAM

Mr. Michael Mantha: I have hundreds more signatures in regard to saving the Ontario Ranger Program.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, draw attention to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

“The Ontario Ranger Program takes youth out of their comfort zones by taking youth from the south and placing them in northern camps and vice versa, allowing for personal growth;

“The Ontario Ranger Program also helps nearby rural communities as the Ontario Rangers help with various work projects and build partnerships within the communities; the work is recognized and appreciated by these small communities;

“An extensive amount of work maintaining the interior routes in major provincial parks such as Quetico, Algonquin and Temagami is completed by Ontario Rangers on multi-day overnight canoe trips (and is otherwise unreachable);

“The lifelong skills and friendships built during the Ontario Ranger Program help youth develop into mature, confident, independent individuals, which is well worth the money spent on the program;

“Low-income and high-risk youth sent to rangers are isolated from their home situation and are exposed to the positive team-building environment within the Ontario Ranger Program;

“Therefore, your petitioners call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demonstrate that the Ontario Ranger Program is a valuable program to the youth of Ontario, reverse the decision to close the Ontario Ranger Program and continue to help youth make a difference in Ontario.”

I support this petition and will present it to Jake to bring down to the Clerks.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

REGISTERED HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONALS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES PROFESSIONNELS EN RESSOURCES HUMAINES INSCRITS

Mr. Dhillon moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 32, An Act respecting the Human Resources Professionals Association / Projet de loi 32, Loi concernant l'Association des professionnels en ressources humaines.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Dhillon.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I would first like to start off by thanking the co-sponsors of this bill, the member from Whitby-Oshawa and the member from Beaches-East York. As always, throughout the process of bringing this bill forward, I really appreciate their support for co-sponsoring this private member's bill.

1550

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the Human Resources Professionals Association, known as the HRP, is Ontario's HR thought leader, with more than 20,000 members in 28 chapters in Ontario. Those members represent approximately 8,000 organizations in every industrial sector and between them employ around 2.5 million Ontario workers.

HRPA is governed by legislation encoded in the Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario Act, 1990. It sets out the objects of the association and its purposes, and these are:

“(a) to establish and encourage the acceptance and maintenance of uniform province-wide standards of knowledge, experience and ethics for all persons engaged in the field of human resources management;

“(b) to promote and further the education and improve the competence of persons engaged in human resources management by granting registration and membership to persons who meet the standards of the association;

“(c) to hold examinations and prescribe tests of competency deemed appropriate to qualify membership in and certification by the association;

“(d) to maintain discipline among members of the association;

“(e) to provide a medium for communication and exchange of information, knowledge and ethical standards for those persons engaged in the field of human resources management;

“(f) to sponsor, encourage and promote liaison with other individuals, associations, and groups engaged in similar or related fields of activity....”

In summary, the core purpose of HRP is to ensure that HR professionals who are members of the association are competent and act in an ethical manner.

The major goal as a regulatory association is to protect the public interest, and they do this by:

—“setting standards for our members who enter and work in the HR profession;

—“creating rules of professional conduct for when and how members may be removed from the membership;

—“the power to regulate the practice of members;

—“the power to establish a professional liability insurance requirement;

—“the power to establish requirements for membership and certification; and

—“updated member conduct procedures.”

HRPA members possess a high level of professionalism and are protected by regulatory safeguards to complete this work, to both create value for the organizations that employ them and to ensure the legislative rights of workers in the workplace.

As you know, Ontario businesses are in the midst of great change as business practices, economic conditions, workforce demographics and labour law all become more complex and interrelated. HRP's HR professionals are at the centre of this rapid change.

HR professionals are now often seen as champions of change as organizations continually assess and seek to increase their operational effectiveness. HRP members make huge contributions to the success and productivity of the business community and organizations of all types.

As regulated professionals, HRP members specifically possess a high level of professionalism and human resource capital management knowledge that creates enormous value for the organizations that employ them. HRP members provide this value by:

—identifying workforce trends and forecast changes before they happen;

—discovering potential problems before they materialize and adversely impact the organization;

—identifying key talent for retention and leadership development; and

—forecasting changes in human capital resources within the organization and in the changing economic environment.

To sum up their key role in Ontario organizations, HR professionals put the right people in the right place at the right time.

What will this bill do for members of the HRP? This bill provides HRP members the long-sought recognition as true professionals.

HRPA completed a recent study that showed that human resources leaders with CHRP designations are promoted faster and are increasing their job opportunities and pay. The report showed that 45% of generalists with CHRPs became HR managers in five years, whereas only 20% of HR generalists without the CHRP designation became HR managers in five years. The number of job postings requesting applicants to have a CHRP has nearly doubled, from 36% to 67%. The median pay for an HR manager without a CHRP is \$63,100. For HR managers with a CHRP, their median pay is \$73,000.

This confirmed confidence in HR accreditation is reflected in the greater career opportunities for HRP members to advance to more senior corporate positions who possess the CHRP designation. Bill 32 reinforces the

value of the CHRP designation for members of HRPAs and for employers who hire them. This act will better safeguard the public interest by enhancing its regulatory and oversight powers to ensure that their members' workplaces are fully compliant with existing and future provincial workplace legislation. This is supported by a recent HRPAs study that looked at the information about convictions under the Employment Standards Act, 2000, posted on the Ministry of Labour's website. HRPAs cross-referenced the list of convicted employers with HRPAs membership records. Of the 489 ESA convictions between October 2008 and January 2010, none could be linked to any HRPAs member.

When HRPAs's board of directors committed to updating our current act, we sought an independent expert opinion on the bill from Richard Steinecke, a legal expert in the area of professional regulation. Mr. Steinecke believes that there are numerous advantages to modernizing and upgrading the existing HRPAs act. He notes that, in general, Bill 32 addresses many of the gaps found in the current private statute of 1990. Mr. Steinecke concludes by stating that Bill 32 "provides numerous advantages for both members and the public and is consistent with similar statutes."

Bill 32 will assist HRPAs and its members to evolve into a strong and credible tier-one profession. This is because there are risks—

Ms. Cindy Forster: Point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: We don't have a quorum.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Do we have a quorum?

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is present, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A quorum is present.

Proceed, the member from Brampton West.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

This is because there are risks to consumers and businesses that are not fully addressed in the 1990 act.

These include harm to the public. In 2010 and 2011 alone, more than one in seven former HRPAs members continued to use the CHRP designation without authorization. This number is growing, and it does not include misuse by people who were never members of the HRPAs, or unreported or undetected cases of misuse. The HRPAs currently has little power to stop this.

There is harm to business. Unregulated persons may not know the laws regarding workplace safety, violence and discrimination and the Employment Standards Act, in which businesses could be fined by the Ministry of Labour as a result of ill-informed advice from unregulated HR professionals. In many cases, businesses relied on these persons to provide them with advice on employment standards and proper accommodations for employees.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: We don't have a quorum. People need to keep their seats.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Is there a quorum present?

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is now present, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A quorum is now present.

The member from Brampton West, you have the floor.

1600

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you, Speaker.

Bill 32 will also add HRPAs to the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, as a schedule 1 signatory, which it voluntarily adopted three years ago as testimony to its commitment to transparent, objective, impartial and fair employment treatment and career opportunities for all Ontarians.

Another distinction would be that HRPAs's board would include three individuals who are not members of the association or a self-regulated human resources body, and who are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Some stakeholders have said that Bill 32 will be a burden to employers. I would say that this is simply false. Membership in both the HRPAs and the CHRP designation is voluntary. Employers always have the choice whether to hire or not to hire CHRPs for their firms or businesses.

The public can enjoy greater confidence in regulated HR professionals who are HRPAs members. This new act gives consumers and businesses a fair and transparent vehicle to make complaints about HR professionals. It will protect consumers and businesses from unregulated HR professionals and will provide a practical way to achieve the goals set out in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and the Employment Standards Act.

Ultimately, strengthening the protection of the public is what Bill 32 is all about. As the Ontario workplace evolves and as the government continues to introduce legislation to govern the workplace, organizations need professionals who can interpret and implement these rules for the benefit of employers and employees.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour to rise this afternoon, on behalf of the residents of Dufferin–Caledon, to discuss Bill 32, the Registered Human Resources Professions Act, 2013.

I'll tell a brief story that relates directly to the Registered Human Resources Professions Act. You will recall that we were all participating in an election in 2011, in the fall. Of course, one of the things that we all like to do is canvass homes for votes. I'm not sure how

many of the members in the House are familiar with a small hamlet in Dufferin county called Mansfield, but if you ever travel up Airport Road towards Collingwood, perhaps to go skiing, Mansfield is a small hamlet in the northern part of my riding, in Dufferin county. I was canvassing in Mansfield. This rural subdivision has maybe 30 homes in it. Most people were shocked that they actually saw a politician canvassing in a rural subdivision—but regardless, one of the doors that I knocked on wanted to talk about the Registered Human Resources Professionals Act. Of course, that was 2011, and we're now at 2013. We've already seen this bill. This bill was in the 39th Parliament and didn't get through, and now, of course, we're in the 40th Parliament, and we're still discussing it, three years later. I won't presuppose that that woman I spoke to at the door voted for me, but she seemed absolutely amazed that I was familiar with the legislation, had participated and knew where it was at the committee stage.

So here we are, three years later. Perhaps I should go back to that Mansfield home, after we have finally finished discussing the Registered Human Resources Professionals Act, and let her know that we're one step closer.

Bill 32 was introduced earlier this year, in March, and is clearly supported by all parties in this Legislature. It was actually co-sponsored by a member from each party. The bill was co-sponsored by the member from Bramp-ton West, the member from Beaches–East York and, of course, my Progressive Conservative colleague and deputy leader, the member for Whitby–Oshawa. This is an initiative that the people over at the Human Resources Professionals Association—HRPA, as it is known—have been pushing for, as I said, for quite some time.

This bill was already introduced immediately following the last election, in December 2011, and received all-party support at that point. The 2011 version, however, again, introduced by the member for Willowdale, was also co-sponsored by the member for Whitby–Oshawa and the member for Beaches–East York.

So that the viewers at home understand—and I'm sure they're wondering, "How could it have taken this long for a bill that is supported by all three parties to get to third reading?" Well, the answer is actually quite simple. In October of last year, then Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty prorogued the Legislature and resigned from office. You see, things had gotten particularly heated, as we know, at that point in time, as Dalton McGuinty was under a microscope from the official opposition to come clean with Ontario taxpayers about the true cost of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plant cancellations. Back then, Dalton McGuinty, soon-to-be Premier Wynne and the rest of the Liberal caucus and cabinet were still citing low-balled cost estimates for the cancellation. We have since learned, of course, that those cancellation costs are in excess of \$1 billion.

My point for mentioning this is to make sure that those in the galleries and those listening at home understand why this bill has been delayed so long before finally

making it to third reading today. It was delayed because when Dalton McGuinty prorogued the Legislature, all the work that had been done up to that point, over a year of legislation and over 100 bills, were all erased—died on the order paper, as they say. So good bills like this one had to be reintroduced to start the entire process over from scratch.

Bill 32 was one of a number of bills included in a proposal put forward by my leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus to clear the decks and focus on the economy here at Queen's Park. What PC leader Tim Hudak said was, "There are some bills we all agree on. Let's get them done, and let's please focus on the economy and creating jobs in Ontario." While I'm glad to see Bill 32 up for debate today, I must say I am disappointed that we still have not seen any semblance of an economic plan from Premier Wynne and her Liberal government.

What Bill 32 sets out to do is update the Human Resources Professionals Association's existing self-regulation act. HRPA regulates the human resources profession in Ontario and issues the certified human resources professional designation. HRPA has 20,000 members working in 8,000 organizations across Ontario. These organizations employ more than two million Ontarians.

Some of the things that HRPA determines for its members are:

- the right to set standards for who may enter the profession;
- the right to set standards of practice for those working in the profession;
- the right to create rules for when and how members may be removed from the profession;
- the power to regulate the practice of members;
- the power to establish a professional liability insurance requirement;
- the power to establish requirements for memberships and certification; and, finally,
- the power to discipline its members.

Bill 32 addresses a number of issues in the industry. Bill 32 provides a framework for membership in the association and prohibits the use of specified designations and initials by unauthorized individuals or entities. It also sets out procedures for dealing with complaints against the association's members, establishes a disciplinary process and authorizes practice inspections.

Bill 32 will also establish procedures for determining whether a member of the association is incapacitated and creates accommodation in cases where incapacity affects a member's practising ability. Bill 32 provides for the appointment of inspectors and investigates and sets out their powers and also stipulates that these powers apply only to members of HRPA, not all HR professionals. Bill 32 introduces mandatory professional liability insurance to consultants who do not work for organizations that provide such insurance.

Bill 32 will therefore mean that HRPA will be better able to ensure the quality of the HR profession in Ontario. This will mean better control over its members'

profession. Bill 32 is also important because it will provide more regulatory strength for HRP, which will allow the organization to better protect the public, employers and employees.

I support Bill 32 because I feel that by providing a necessary, fair and strong regulatory structure to the HR profession in Ontario, we are achieving a win-win for business, the public and Ontario's HR professionals, and hopefully at the next election, I will be able to knock on that door in Mansfield and say, "This time we got 'er done." We are finally getting that much closer to passing Bill 32, protecting employers and employees and ensuring that the HR Professionals Association gets what they need to service Ontario.

1610

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's my pleasure to get up and actually speak about Bill 32. The member from Beaches—East York also wanted me to extend his thanks that this bill is finally here. He is busy chairing a committee as we speak here today, so I'm going to speak on his behalf, along with some of my other colleagues.

The member from Beaches—East York asked me to applaud the people who have brought this bill forward, I think three times. You've been here, you've heard it debated, you went away, it never went anywhere, you brought it back again, it got debated, the House got prorogued, it died, and now you're here again with this bill. Hopefully, it will get passed in the next day or two.

I have had a lot of experience on the other side of the table from HR people across the province. I worked for many years for the Ontario Nurses' Association. Before that, I was one of those union hacks, as the Tories like to talk about.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Not a union boss? You weren't a union boss?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Not a union boss. I was one of those union hacks for 20 years.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Show it to me in Hansard. Never said it.

Hon. David Zimmer: She never said it. Never said it.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Oh, I'm proud to be a union hack. For 20 years I represented nurses at an elected level, and then for 20 more years I represented nurses in this province as a staff person for the Ontario Nurses' Association. I tell you, they're great people to represent. Now I'm telling my age, because I really did that for 40 years. I'm only 50 now.

The human resources sector has grown immensely over those years. Whether it's a small employer or a large employer, the role of human resource professionals has grown immensely. In the old days, you might in a small employer have one person who was looking after all of it: They were looking after the hiring, the firing, perhaps the negotiations if it was a unionized setting, and the health and safety issues. But as legislation has grown in this province, you really have to have people with credentials,

people with a designation, to be able to deal with employees in an appropriate way.

I want to talk a bit about this bill being included in the so-called programming motion. We actually call it a time allocation motion. This bill is included with the Skin Cancer Prevention Act, the act to enact the Local Food Act—that's kind of a tongue twister—the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, the Wireless Services Agreement Act, the spousal exemption act, the EllisDon act, and the carbon—I don't know if this is a typo; is it dioxide or monoxide?

Interjection: Monoxide.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I think it's the carbon monoxide detectors act.

Anyway, we weren't part of this time allocation. We weren't asked to be part of this time allocation. There were these kind of secret negotiations going on between the Liberals and the Tories. The Tories are always talking about the NDP propping up the government, but, in fact, the Tories are propping up the government in this actual programming/time allocation motion.

This really was all about EllisDon. It was all about Bill 74, and it was all about the Liberals, who didn't want to take ownership of that bill, getting the Tories onside. They brought a few of the Tory bills in here so that they could actually get their EllisDon bill passed, a bill that would have protected a large construction company in this province that has billions of dollars of work and has had an agreement for 60 years with the construction unions, and this bill would have seen that end. At the end of the day, the Liberals voted against their own motion, except for a couple of people who supported it.

Really, that's why we're here today about this particular bill, the Registered Human Resources Professionals Act. I think we're probably doing a disservice to this act because there are so many issues that you could actually talk about around human resources. There are millions of employees in this province, and there are thousands of people who work in the HR sector. I've got many stories that I could actually share with you.

There were NDP bills as well that should have been included in a programming motion, had we been asked to participate—unlikely we would have because we never would have been able to support the EllisDon bill, but there were things like an amendment to the Planning Act that would have actually dealt with inclusionary zoning so that we could actually get some more affordable housing built in this province.

The Ombudsman Act—the member from Hamilton Mountain's act about the children's aid societies and about protecting the children in this province by having Ombudsman oversight.

We had the Mining Amendment Act. That's an act from the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, and that would be about processing resources here in the province that would create many jobs.

The Protecting Employees' Tips Act, Michael Prue's act that would protect all of those people who are working in low-paid precarious work in this province

who are not getting to keep all of their tips in many cases—a bill that has come forward a couple of times as well.

There are some health bills that are still on the order paper—Meningitis Awareness Day, the Sikh Heritage Month Act, the Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating Act, and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act for post-traumatic stress disorders—all very important bills in their own right, but nobody asked us if we wanted to actually be included in that programming motion. So those bills are still sitting on the order paper even though they affect many people in this province.

In my experience in working with HR people, I have to say that the vast majority of them were great. Whether they have CHRP designation or they didn't have a CHRP designation, the vast majority are really good people who are looking to do the right thing for both the employer they work for as well as the employees.

I had some experience in both the private sector and the public sector, in small private nursing homes owned perhaps by one family in Niagara Falls—the Simons owned a couple of little homes in Niagara Falls—or the big employers that had 1,500 nurses. We often say in the NDP that our health care shouldn't be for-profit, and so it's an opportunity for me to raise that issue here because, under the Tories, back in the Mike Harris days, they actually started to tender out those RFPs. So where are home care and—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Where's Bob Rae these days?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I don't know.

Where our community workers, our community nurses, our community RPNs working in community health care were actually working for the Victorian Order of Nurses and the Saint Elizabeths of the world, and they were actually paid a fairly decent wage; they had benefits and pensions—all of that went by the wayside when the Tories moved to an RFP tender, and private companies actually got involved in health care.

The interesting thing is that many of these private companies didn't even have any employees. They bid on these contracts. They lowballed the contracts and they ended up with them. Then we had nurses and personal support workers and other workers actually ending up having to go and work for the private sector at a much reduced rate of pay, without full-time hours in many cases, without a pension plan or without any benefits, all for the sake of somebody making a profit on the backs of people who require health care in this province and on the backs of workers in this province. Those are my comments around there.

1620

I also wanted to bring into this that I think HR's job is more difficult these days because of all of the precarious work that we see in this province. There was a report done by McMaster University and by the United Way, I think, in conjunction with perhaps the federation of labour. It just goes to show that it's mostly women who are in precarious work. I've brought the report with me, because I thought that some of the stuff was quite interesting.

They did this study around the Hamilton area. Only 50% of people that they studied are in jobs that are both permanent and full-time. That has increased by 45% over a 20-year period. So I think it's difficult for people working in the human resource area to have to deal with people that are struggling. They might have to go and work two or three jobs. People end up mentally stressed, and the report speaks to that. It says that, in fact, people who are in this precarious employment, earning minimum wage and lower wages or having to juggle three or four jobs to make ends meet, often end up ill. They can end up with some mental health issues related to all the stress that is actually put on them by not having a permanent job and not having benefits and those kinds of things.

Now, back in the 1970s and 1980s, I'd say, when I was dealing with human resource people, many of them weren't designated; they didn't have the education. But they weren't dealing with the multitude of issues that we're dealing with here today.

I know that things like pay equity came up in the last 20 years, and I think Michael talked about that in his debates the last time and the time before. It's an issue that is still in the forefront, although we achieved pay equity in many instances across this province. Although it took the federal government 20 years, I think, to actually settle pay equity for one group of women, they finally paid that out. It is still prevalent because we need to maintain pay equity in this province, so people in HR need to have either the education or the experience to deal with that issue.

The Ontario disabilities act has been in the forefront in the last few years, so human resource people need to ensure that employers across this province, whether they're in the public sector or the private sector, are actually complying with the rules as they start to get implemented.

They also deal with things like the Human Rights Code and the Employment Standards Act. We know that across this province, there is a huge problem, particularly under ESA, with respect to the monitoring of the benefits that should be afforded to employees in this province. We hear that in our constituency office time and time again. If you have good HR people who are designated and trained, they can give some advice to employees about how to manoeuvre their way through those systems.

We don't have all good employers in this province, though. Sometimes that is very problematic. But I think, because of social media and because of the Internet, employees are much more aware of their rights today. They can go online and they can have a look at the ESA bulletin or the human rights bulletins. That actually creates some work for human resource people—all the more reason why they need to have that designation and we need to ensure that the people who are actually dealing with employees in this province are up on all of those pieces of legislation as well.

The duty to accommodate certainly has become a real issue—well, in my experience—over the last 10 years. In

the early days, if a nurse, for example, injured her back and needed some permanent accommodation, employers might say, "We can't accommodate you; so sorry; too bad. If you can't come and do all of the duties of your job, well, you'll just have to stay home, and we're not going to pay you." Today, employers work very hard at trying to accommodate, because there is legislation there and they have to. So you need people who are trained to do that.

With some of the bigger employers, it won't necessarily be HR which is working on these programs. But with small employers where there are only three or four people in HR—payroll, hiring—they need to be a real generalist because there are so many pieces of legislation that face them on any given workday.

The other area, of course, is workplace harassment. I hear about that quite often, and I certainly did in my role at ONA, when I was working for the Ontario Nurses' Association. It could be worker-to-worker harassment; it could be worker-to-manager harassment; it could even be worker-to-patient harassment or worker-to-patient's-family harassment. There was not a real good understanding of that legislation. I know that in my 20 years of dealing with people—probably in the last five years, it was more prevalent—when that legislation was introduced, there was a real learning curve for not only the union side, but for the employer side as well, as to, what does the legislation mean? That legislation is still lacking today because enforcement isn't there, and there is no kind of penalty to employers if they're not complying with that particular legislation.

I'm going to try to wrap up because my fellow colleagues want to speak to this issue.

This bill, once again, has been a long time coming, and it's certainly something that we're going to support, whether it actually needed to—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Come in this way.

Ms. Cindy Forster:—come in this way. I don't think we necessarily agree with that. But it's here, and so we are going to be supporting it, and we're going to be dealing with this in this short period of time.

I will once again, on behalf of the member from Beaches—East York, thank the people who have been so patient and tenacious in trying to get this passed through. It really mirrors many other types of careers—professional engineers, various health professionals—and the legislation is probably long overdue.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Hon. David Zimmer: I want to speak for a few minutes on this bill. Before I became a minister, when I was a parliamentary assistant, I had the pleasure of introducing this bill on two previous occasions, and for technical reasons, it never made it through. The last time it came up was about this time last fall, October 2012, when the Legislature was prorogued. So I am very, very pleased that the member for Whitby—Oshawa, the member for Beaches—East York and the member for Brampton West have brought this bill forward. I think

it's a fine example of all three political parties—Liberal, Conservative, NDP—recognizing a very worthwhile piece of legislation and uniting together, speaking to their respective caucuses and getting us here today.

1630

I do want to introduce two representatives of the Human Resources Professionals Association who are with us today and have been following this bill in its two previous incarnations and, indeed, following it in its current incarnation: Mr. Claude Balthazard, who is the vice-president of regulatory affairs, sitting over here, and Scott Allinson, who is the vice-president of public affairs. They've done yeoman's service with members of this Legislature from all parties to get this legislation to the stage that we're at today.

I've listened to the debate, but the overarching question is: Why is this a good piece of legislation? What will it do for Ontario? Why is it that all members of all political parties have gotten behind this bill? I think it's a realization that in Ontario, we are trying to build an economy which will be one of the leading economies in the world, certainly in the country.

We have been, over the years, stressing the need for high-tech industries, banking industries, investment industries, manufacturing industries, large industries and small industries. We have been doing everything possible, in effect, to make Ontario the first choice for an organization or an individual who wants to do business. Whether they're a creative young entrepreneur or whether it's a large existing business operating in another country that wants to open a Canadian branch office or Canadian branch plant, we want those businesses to come to Ontario, because to the extent that they can come to Ontario and generate jobs and tax dollars, that's all going to filter into the system, and we're going to be able to use those revenues for better hospitals, better roads, better schools and everything else.

One of the keys to attracting industry—large industry, small industry, entrepreneurs, people with ideas—to Ontario as a place to do business is the condition, the quality of its workforce. Is the workforce well-trained and well-educated? Is the workforce well-managed? Are there great histories of strikes? Are there great histories of labour disruption? Is the relationship, broadly speaking, between the employer and the employee a healthy one? Are both those parties, the employer and the employee, working in an environment in which the employee achieves their ambition and develops their confidence? Is it a situation in which the employer can engage with his or her employees and whatever type of business they're doing? Can they engage in that business with confidence and pride?

If all of those positives come together, it tends to lead to successful businesses and successful employer-employee relationships. It's the role of HRP to assist in building that relationship between employer and employee. The members of HRP have got all of the skill sets to make that kind of a contribution so that, at the end of the day, everybody wants to do business in Ontario. It

becomes the place of choice to start business, to continue business and to relocate business.

As I said in my earlier remarks, one of the keys to that is to have a working relationship, a working environment where everybody has pride and confidence. I don't want to repeat the various skill-sets and training programs and all of the assets that the members of HRP A bring to this exercise—you've heard them all from the previous speakers—but they are high-quality skill-sets, they are necessary skill-sets, and the contribution that HRP A will make to this environment that we want to create in Ontario, where Ontario becomes the destination of choice for new businesses, small businesses, large businesses and entrepreneurs is, to a considerable degree, due to the climate that HRP A can create in the Ontario workforce.

HRP A can give employees advice. HRP A can give employers advice. Often, a business relocating to Ontario or opening a new branch plant, if you will, in Ontario, especially a foreign company—perhaps from the Far East, perhaps from Europe, perhaps from South America or perhaps from one of the states south of the border—comes to Ontario and it can be very difficult for them to understand the employment culture, the work culture in Ontario.

If they relocate their business and they don't get that employment culture right, they can often get off on the wrong foot. It is in HRP A's skill set to be able to advise those businesses—ones that are already located here, but especially the ones that are coming from afar that are trying to understand the Ontario system.

To the extent that HRP A can make that contribution and help Ontarians—whatever their walk in life is, whatever their job is, whatever their businesses are—to create that climate where people in Canada, in Ontario and outside of Ontario will say, "Ontario is our number one choice to locate our businesses"—one of the reasons they'll do that is because organizations like HRP A have created a first-class employment employer-employee relationship. That's why I'm supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise today and to speak to Bill 32, the Registered Human Resources Professionals Act. I was fortunate enough to speak to Bill 32 at third reading, as well as to see it pass through the regulations and private bills committee. It's my hope that this bill will pass third reading and receive royal assent.

The folks who have been pushing hard for this legislation have been waiting for just a few years for this bill to get to third reading. They saw a bill being debated, only to look on as the House prorogued for the 2011 general election. Then they saw the bill debated again last year, only to witness the resignation of Dalton McGuinty and another prorogation. Many good bills were killed on that October afternoon.

But there is good news: Bill 32 is being debated at third reading here today, a day that surely couldn't come soon enough for those HR professionals pushing for this sensible piece of legislation to pass.

Bill 32 seeks to repeal the Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario Act, 1990, and replace it. What is more important to note is that it would be a public bill, while the previous legislation is a private act. This confers status and recognition to the act by declaring it as the will of the Legislature. It also sends a clear message to the HR professionals around the province that their role is absolutely taken seriously.

Since 1990, the Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario has regulated the HR field by granting the certified human resources professional, the CHRP—or, as I call it, chirp—designation.

HRP A regulates the profession in a number of ways, through:

—first, the establishment of standards or requirements for registration with and certification by HRP A; the assessment of the qualifications of individuals against established standards or requirements for registration with and certification by HRP A; and the official recognition that an individual has met established standards or requirements for registration with and certification by HRP A;

—second, the establishment of standards of professional conduct by prescribing a code of ethics, rules of professional conduct and practice standards;

1640

—third, the establishment of a complaints investigation and discipline process whereby alleged misconduct, incapacity or incompetence of members of the HRP A are in fact investigated, leading to appropriate disciplinary measures in cases where such disciplinary measures are warranted; and

—last, the establishment of effective appeal mechanisms whereby regulatory decisions may be reviewed.

Speaker, for the last 20 years, the HRP A has done great work for its 20,000-plus members in Ontario. But times have changed, and legislation must change with them. Those within the human resources industry have told us that the original act is outdated and needs a change. Bill 32 creates a modern, professional statute for the association and its members by addressing many of the gaps in the current private statute.

One positive aspect of Bill 32 is that it will prohibit the use of specified designations and initials by unauthorized individuals. This will close up a potential loophole, to prevent those wishing to exploit the benefits of having a CHRP designation. It is a critical right for a professional association to safeguard the use of designations or initials to guarantee their value. We learned in committee that under the act that Bill 32 seeks to replace, the Human Resources Professionals Association had no way to control people leaving the association and still using the CHRP designation. Human resources professionals are given an enormous amount of responsibility and require a great amount of trust from their employers and fellow employees. They're asked to handle a wide variety of situations. It's great to know that your HR professional is acting competently and ethically. Those who leave the association are not receiving ongoing

training and are not bound to HRP's professional standards. The Human Resources Professionals Association has heard complaints about these former members who have clung on to their designation falsely, but are powerless to stop them. They can only enforce sanctions or quality standards on the current members, as it stands today. Closing up this loophole to ensure that only those who are currently members of the association and bound to its standards can use the CHRP designation is a good thing. It will protect the value of the designation for those who have it and will benefit employers and employees, who can be sure that they are in good hands.

Members of the HR profession with a CHRP designation do a great job of keeping up with legislation for their employers, which is, of course, of critical importance. I suppose that they've had some practice over the years following their own bill.

Members of this House are surely aware of how often laws, rules and regulations change and how difficult that can be on business owners. Many members have owned their own businesses.

Designated human resources professionals do a great job to make sure the companies they work for are compliant with legislation and regulations as they change over time. The HRP's help keep them updated on any changes, through educational programs that detail how new laws impact the workplace. If a law is broken, even if it was a simple regulatory oversight, there could be an investigation launched into the workplace, which could, and would, be incredibly disruptive and time-consuming for employers and employees alike. Ensuring that your company is up to date on legislation is incredibly important. The CHRP designation ensures this for business.

The act also sets out procedures for dealing with complaints against the HRP's members, establishes a disciplinary process and authorizes practice inspections. As HR professionals are given very personal information—for example, financial or health information of individuals—we must establish an adequate mechanism to handle complaints. By establishing a procedure for such matters, it depoliticizes what can often be a heated issue.

Another positive aspect of the bill that I would like to highlight is the increased oversight of the HRP. Under the new bill, three members of the association's board would be non-members. These independent board members will increase the accountability of the HRP moving forward.

Some critics of the bill are concerned that it will be a burden on employees and employers. This couldn't be further from the truth, Madam Speaker. Membership in the Human Resources Professionals Association and the certified human resources professional designation are in fact voluntary. HR professionals will have the freedom to choose whether or not they will belong to the association and earn a designation. Similarly, employers will be free to hire members or even non-members. The powers in the new act apply only to members of the HRP and not to all HR professionals.

At the end of the day, strengthening protection for the public is what Bill 32 is all about. In the corporate world, HR professionals are counted on to ensure workplaces evolve to meet the changing demands of employers and employees. Similarly, it's our duty as legislators to ensure that legislation evolves with the needs of society and the professional associations who serve them. This bill modernizes a professional statute, increases oversight and accountability, and puts mechanisms in place to establish ethical standards in an incredibly important profession.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Whitby-Oshawa as well as the members from Brampton West and Beaches-East York for co-sponsoring this bill and bringing a positive piece of legislation to this place.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this bill in the Legislature today, as I know that the human resource professionals who have been promoting it for some time will be very pleased to see it finally make its way to a conclusion. They, and we, have been here before, of course, as this bill, in a previous life, was yet another of those bills we lost due to prorogation in October of last year. The history of this legislation goes back even further than that. It's good that we have reached this stage now. Speaker, I, along with the human resource professionals, hope to see it passed and brought into law.

As the workplace changes, the role of those who work in human resources is becoming ever more important, and it is past time that we have legislation that replaces an out-of-date act from over 20 years ago. It is important that we recognize the professionalism required in human resources and that the people in those positions are treated as professionals and also that they be required to act as professionals. The bill will allow the HRP to take a much more hands-on approach to training, monitoring and disciplining its members, to ensure that a higher standard is expected and delivered in the field.

The bill will not require companies to hire only someone with a certified human resources professional designation, but it will allow employers to know, when they are hiring, whether an applicant, through their professional designation, has the proven skills and knowledge to do the job. It also allows employees and the public to know that they are working with someone who knows their job. It offers choice and accountability.

In unionized workplaces, employees have developed, along with management, collective agreements that work to the benefit of employees and employers alike. These contracts ensure that both parties know the rules and their shared responsibilities. They bring a stability to the workplace that is envied around the world. Sometimes those contracts can be very detailed, and it requires a significant degree of professionalism to work with them, both on the union side and on the side of management. Thankfully, as contract language has developed, professionalism has developed along with it.

Similarly, our employment laws have been developing over the years. We have employment equity laws. We have laws about harassment in the workplace. We have the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Human resource personnel need to understand these laws, which requires a good degree of professionalism, whether it's in a workplace that is unionized or not.

1650

This act will allow the HRP to build upon their credibility, giving increased confidence to the public. They can train their members in an ongoing way to make sure that they are up to date with all of the legal requirements of their profession.

Also, in a world where our technological possibilities grow at an alarming pace, they can make sure their members are aware of and trained in the use of any new tools that become available to assist them in their work.

As an organization, they will be available to provide advice to their members on a daily basis and help them to make the correct decisions.

They can be a force for good by insisting on fair and honest treatment in the workplace. When they hear of members who are not living up to, who are not complying with the professional standards they have set, they will have the ability to discipline them. This can only raise the bar, and everyone—employers, employees and the public—will know what they should expect from a human resources professional. When they see the letters “CHRP” after someone's name, they will know that it means something. They will know that they are dealing with someone who has the knowledge and trust of their peers. If that turns out not to be the case, they will know that they have someone to report that to.

Throughout Ontario, we have people in all walks of life who are dedicated, skilled and proud of the work they do. They get annoyed and frustrated when others in the same line of work do not meet these same high standards. Maybe it's a builder, maybe a doctor or maybe a car mechanic; we've all heard the frustrations of those dedicated workers who get tarred with the same brush as those who don't put their best foot forward.

In some cases, we certify people in a profession—we give them the authority to regulate themselves; in others, all that is needed is for someone to put a little title after their name, and that's it—no training, nothing. You just say who you are and you start doing a job with no oversight or accountability.

Increasingly, the public wants to know that when they ask someone to do a job, they are trained and qualified to do it. They want to know at the start of that job, not at the end when it's too late.

That's what this bill does for human resources professionals. Those human resources professionals who have been pushing for this for years are proud of the work they do. They've taken the time to get trained and keep themselves updated on the changes in legislation and in the workplace. They want those high standards that they set for themselves to be the expected standard across their profession, and they should be commended for that.

I thank the members from Brampton West, Beaches—East York and Whitby—Oshawa for bringing this bill forward, and I thank the HRP for their diligence and commitment in promoting the issues within.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 32 this afternoon, the Registered Human Resources Professionals Act.

Oftentimes we have professionals from different sectors of the economy approaching us here at Queen's Park, asking us to raise the bar for their particular profession. We've all had conversations like that. Recently, I met with the financial advisers many times. They're asking for this type of legislation in their field as well. There are many others who want to ensure that their professions are held to the highest standard possible here in Ontario. They want to ensure that the reputation of the profession is protected against bad and irresponsible actors who are out there. Let's be very clear: All it takes is one bad apple to ruin the whole lot, and this is what these organizations want to protect against.

It's a responsible act, Bill 32 is, for leading members of this profession. This is the type of legislation we see coming from various professions as well here at Queen's Park. They ask us, as legislators, to ensure that members of their profession are held to a higher account, that they're held to a higher standard, that we're raising the bar for their profession. That's because we all should believe in higher standards, Madam Speaker. We should always strive to raise the level of debate, raise the level of discussion, and raise the level of the profession that we're involved in.

Just last night here in the Legislature we had one such organization. It was the registered veterinary technicians. They were asking, basically, for this type of legislation in their field as well: that we require all veterinary offices out there to have certified RVTs in those veterinary offices. So it happens almost on a daily basis that there are professions out there that want the standards of their profession raised to a higher level.

This act has tri-partisan support for a very good reason. It establishes a regime for the designation of a human resources professional. It establishes a framework for membership in the Human Resources Professionals Association, and it gives that association the ability to govern and regulate its members. This is something that we've done for several other professions, including the engineers—who are here often at Queen's Park—and physicians and lawyers as well.

By giving the association the ability to govern, regulate and, most importantly, discipline its members, we've empowered this organization to uphold the integrity of the profession. We understand that certain professions are self-governed in the interest of the broader public, and the reason that we have granted that designation is because those professions have moral and ethical standards of conduct that may not transgress any legal statutes. As people who interact with the ethical stan-

dards of the industry every day, they have the experience to understand the implications of the actions of their members. We've heard all kinds of examples today from all three sides as to how this would work in the human resources profession.

More importantly, the passage of Bill 32 has a greater symbolism. For almost two years this government refused to acknowledge the presence of a minority government here in the House. I can tell you that the only bills that ever seemed to pass here in the Legislature were the budget bills in the spring every year, and that's because the third party was supporting the Liberal government when those very important confidence votes took place. We here in the official opposition did not believe that those budget bills that were put forward were in the best interests of Ontarians. We could not support those bills, Madam Speaker, and we've seen the evidence as to why we shouldn't have supported those budgets, because they've continued to dig the hole deeper in Ontario. Yet the third party continues to support those budget bills.

Other than the budget bills, we've seen very little as far as legislation pass here in this minority Parliament. If bills came before the House that weren't government bills, they were sometimes passed at second reading. There was almost a sigh of indifference from the government as they passed second reading. The government seemed to be confident in the knowledge that these bills would never get out of committee and see the light of day. Why would they do that, Madam Speaker? It's because the government was trying to create this narrative that the minority Parliament wasn't working. For two years, the government made that happen. They weren't calling bills forward for third reading. They weren't calling bills forward so that they could receive royal assent. There was a narrative that they were trying to create in the Legislature that the minority Parliament wasn't working. Whenever they decided that they would go to the public for a mandate, they would be able to say that, "The official opposition is responsible for this minority Parliament not working."

I think it's quite clear that when you look at what happened here this morning when it came to the small business act that's before the House right now—Bill 105, I believe is the number; that bill passed unanimously yesterday in the House, and the government is trying to claim that that bill was being held up by the official opposition. The Premier made that claim this morning during question period, and nothing could be further from the truth. As a matter of fact, Bill 105 was sent to the general government committee. The reason that it was sent to the general government committee by the members of the government side was because they're trying to suffocate the committee's work when it comes to investigating the emerging scandal with the Pan Am Games. That's why they sent it there, yet they're trying to create this narrative again that the official opposition is blocking the bill, whether or not the small business act is going to—well, it's not going to encourage our economy

to grow. It's a very minor bill. We supported it because we said we would support it, and we've lived up to our word when it comes to the programming motion that was agreed to by our House leader in the official opposition, the member from Simcoe—Grey, Jim Wilson.

1700

It was our party that actually decided that it was time to clear the decks—you've heard that phrase many times here in the Legislature—but nothing was getting through. We had all of these minor bills like the small business act that's going to give small businesses \$800 or \$900 a year. That hardly pays for a newspaper ad for these businesses. It's not going to trigger an uptick in our economy in Ontario—far from it.

At least we, here in the official opposition, led by our House leader, Jim Wilson, decided that we were going to get some bills passed. To the government House leader's credit, at least he agreed to make that happen and that we would clear the decks. We're waiting to see some kind of plan from the government members and from this Premier, who has no mandate. She hasn't been elected by the people of Ontario, and she clearly has no plan for kick-starting the economy, which is stuck in growth rates at about—what, 1.5% or 1.6%? The bills that we've seen coming from the government side are not going to pull us out of this downward spiral that we're in. I credit our House leader, the member from Simcoe—Grey, for helping to push these bills forward and getting them into the programming motion so that we could actually turn some of these good bills into law.

There have been some good bills that have been a part of this programming motion. One of them just received royal assent this morning: Bill 70. Our member from Leeds—Grenville, Steve Clark, was responsible for putting Bill 70 on the floor of the Legislature. It received royal assent this morning. The Ontario Dental Association did a great job in lobbying members of the Legislature and lobbying on behalf of its members in the dental community, and there are dentists out there who are very appreciative.

As a matter of fact, I was at my dentist's office on Friday morning, the Family Dental Centre in Belleville, Ontario, and I received a positive check-up; everything looks good. They were very pleased with the fact that Bill 70 was going to receive royal assent.

When you're in a rural community, there is sometimes only one dentist in town. If the spouse of that dentist can't get treatment from the only dentist in town, who happens to be her husband or his wife, then they have to leave town to get dental services. Bill 70 is one of those common sense bills that should have passed an awfully long time ago.

Congratulations to Steve Clark for putting that on the floor. He has been on quite a record. I believe he has only been in the Legislature for three years and he has already had three private members' bills pass. He's three for three; that's a pretty good average. It's kind of like Big Papi with the Red Sox in the World Series recently—a very solid batting record.

I know that Bill 32 isn't dissimilar from bills like Bill 70 that I was speaking of earlier. Every single party in the Legislature supports these bills, like Bill 32 and Bill 70, and there are so many others that are out there. We couldn't pack them all into this programming motion, but just last week we had our member Ernie Hardeman from Oxford—I think four times now. Am I right? Four times he has debated the Hawkins-Gignac bill.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Five years.

Mr. Todd Smith: For five years he has been debating that bill to make it mandatory for carbon monoxide detectors to be in homes to protect people in the province from carbon monoxide poisoning. Why couldn't we have that bill come out of committee for third reading and receive royal assent so we can protect the people of Ontario? The government wouldn't call bills like that and many others to third reading; even when they made it out of committee, they weren't being called forward.

So we've cleared the decks. Minor legislation that should have been called and, in many cases, has been introduced multiple times, like the Hawkins-Gignac Act, has now been enacted into law. We've removed the government bills that enjoyed wide support, like Bill 32, from the order paper, and we did this because we don't disagree with these small bills. Where we disagree is on the fundamental, larger issues that are facing the province of Ontario. We don't disagree on Bill 32. The bill, in fact, went through committee with almost no changes made to it.

This government doesn't want to talk about the economy. They don't want to talk about the big issues. They don't want to talk about the \$12 billion that we have pegged as our deficit for next year in Ontario. They don't want to talk about the \$280 billion worth of debt, a debt that has doubled under the McGuinty-Wynne government. This government is responsible for tacking \$140 billion onto our debt in the last 10 years. They don't want to talk about that. They want to talk about the small things. They don't want to talk about the large things that are going to kick-start the economy in Ontario. We have cleared the decks, and we're waiting to see what the plan is from this Liberal government. We fear, as most Ontarians fear, that they don't have a plan; they don't have a plan to kick-start our economy.

So we're pleased to support Bill 32, and of course it came to the floor of the Legislature with the name of our member from Whitby-Oshawa on it. She's a co-sponsor on this bill, Christine Elliott, our deputy leader, and her endorsement of this bill adds to its credibility. Our deputy leader is one of the great legislators in this Legislature, and I'm pleased that we're able to support Bill 32, the Registered Human Resources Professionals Act, here in Ontario. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: I would just like to start off by saying I'm thrilled about the regulation of the human resources professionals. Over the years, Speaker, I also represented one of the strongest unions in Canada. I was

with the United Steelworkers, and many times we sat across the table from HR people. Sometimes it wasn't too bad and at other times it could be ugly.

The bottom line was that in those days, many, many years ago—decades ago—with some of these people I wasn't quite sure about their credentials and where they got the title of HR person, because if you looked into their record and where they came from, a lot of them may not have qualified by today's standards. In those days—and maybe even today—in some places they had a tendency to favour the company as opposed to the hourly worker. Many times we got into some pretty heavy disputes and grievances and arbitration because of the leanings toward the management and the company. So I'm glad this has come forward, because it certainly sets out some guidelines that will make it fairer for the worker.

The regulation of human resources professionals is very welcomed by the profession itself, and by so many everyday workers. Today we are so used to HR people holding information that is our whole life: our work history, our age, our family information, who our beneficiaries will be, and even how our health has affected our work. Without really thinking about it, we trust them completely with this very personal information. More importantly, Speaker, we trust them to advise us about how to plan for our future, how to enhance our pension planning, when to think about retiring, and how to protect our families with insurance and health plans. Really, they are the professionals who advise us through life's sometimes biggest decisions. When we think about this and the impact that their advice can have on so much of our lives, how can we think of anything but ensuring the highest standards for these professionals?

Right now, the 47 non-union staff at Stelco/US Steel who are going to be let go will need extreme compassion from the HR people and the best advice possible given by professionals concerned with their welfare and not necessarily just their employer's goals and bottom lines. The HR staff will provide up-to-date, accurate information and give advice on how to use that to make decisions about retiring, getting new training for a needed new job, or buying insurance to help keep health care coverage that may be outdated and discontinued. They may even be asked to provide input on how to challenge decisions of US Steel for the maximum benefit of the employee, something that could be seen as contraindicated for an HR employee at US Steel.

Having a registered professional designation with the force of an association to govern, regulate and discipline the practice provides that extra assurance that we need to rely on information given and advice provided.

Extra comfort is provided through the authority for practice inspections, which I would expect are snap inspections to ensure that the real picture is what the inspector gets.

As one would expect, Bill 32 sets out the details about how this new structure will work, including transitional bylaws, committee structure and administrative structure.

It also establishes high minimum standards of qualification, of practice, of professional ethics, of knowledge, skills and proficiency. It regulates competence and conduct, and promotes knowledge, skills and proficiency, welfare and the interests of the association and inter-professional collaboration—all of the things that we need to ensure the safety and security of HR function in every organization in this province.

1710

One of the areas that is of high concern to me is the advice that an HR professional gives to an injured worker. Filing a report immediately is such a significant first step to ensure that, should there be a lifelong injury, the employee is fully protected by having filed the report, not by taking a management deal to keep working.

I know well the kind of lifelong damage one can suffer from not having that external medical examination and report to the WSIB.

I can give you a personal example of what happened to me, Speaker. At one point, I was working in a blast furnace. Unfortunately, there was a plank missing, and I fell from a three-high scaffold and burnt myself with a torch as it fell with me. I was injured. The company decided, in their infinite wisdom, that they would let me come in on light duties, as they called it. I would come in and just answer the phone and sit at a desk. Being a young, naive employee, I thought, "Boy, that's not bad. I still get my regular pay. I'm not on sick pay," which was 70%. "I get my full pay, and I get to sit there." Little did I know that when I had an injury later on in life and my knee bothered me—a combination of sports and my fall—and I went to look for any kind of help or compensation, the answer I got was, "Mr. Miller, you never reported that. We don't have any record of that."

So I got shafted for being a good employee and trying to do what was right for my company. They led me down the path. It's terrible. It has happened to thousands of people—thousands. I can name many of my friends who are suffering now from injuries because they were good employees who didn't report.

Another reason they didn't report the accident is because the company would get a rebate from the WSIB for not reporting, for having a good safety record. So not only was I getting shafted, they were getting a big cheque back at the end of the year for not reporting injuries—that it would be a safe place to work—until there was a fatality, and then they couldn't get around that.

So I'm glad this is being looked at. I'm glad that these people will be held accountable by themselves, by their own organization—to work to benefit the employees as well as the management and the companies you're going to work for. When a person dedicates 30 or 40 years to an organization, and they find out in the end that they didn't report something and now they're going to be suffering for the rest of their remaining years because the company didn't do due diligence, because the company let them down, it's very scary.

Often, the HR professional is the one who gets the job of advising an employee that they may need to contact

the employee assistance program for any number of reasons, but primarily for those that have an impact on their colleagues.

It is the HR professional on whom we rely, particularly in a non-union environment, to provide the correct advice to an injured worker.

Speaker, in a non-union environment, you don't have much say. You rely on these people. If they let you down or mislead you, you have no grievance procedure; you have no arbitration; you have no one to go to to fight for you. If you try to take them to court or try to go into a situation where you're trying to retrieve some kind of benefits or coverage, good luck, because they've got big lawyers—you're in trouble.

The role of an HR professional is always evolving. They now have the watchful eyes of the Human Rights Commission ensuring that there is employment equity. They have to know the worldwide educational equivalencies to those required in a job. They have to know and understand many cultures and be sure that we are inclusive in our hiring practices.

I'm always amazed at the HR staff's ability to write up job descriptions and job advertisements, to write interview questions, to review every applicant's submission and whittle down the list to the best candidates to be interviewed. And the job doesn't stop there. Once they've led the interview process, they have references to check—and recommend to the employer that an applicant qualifies for and is well recommended by references for the job.

I think probably the hardest part of the job is when there's a massive layoff or shutdown and the HR rep has to take the employees through the often very painful process to move to their new reality; that is, without work. Every employee has to have complete confidence that their HR is working for them, to ensure that they are treated as fairly and equitably as possible at every stage of their working life.

It's a pretty tall order and there will be failures, but having a professional organization to provide ongoing training, requalification, certification and inspections should provide some security for those affected by HR decisions. But the inspections piece is one that could leave employees somewhat unnerved. The idea that an inspector can remove their personnel file for the purpose of inspection appears to be without their prior knowledge or permission. That's pretty scary, especially if, for some reason, the company wanted to build a file against you to get rid of you for whatever reason, to make room for someone else, maybe a relative or friend they want to hire, and all of a sudden they start a paper trail on you, and you don't even know what's going in there. You don't even know what's in your file. You can't even defend yourself, because you don't know what they put in, when they put it in, what date they put it in; but this will change that, and that's good.

Because of this access to very personal, private information, I would hope that those hired as inspectors are also required to hold the same HR designation and oath and commitment to the same standards of confiden-

tiality as the HR professionals, and that their handling of the materials and writing of reports is governed as tightly as the creation and use of the file and information in the first instance.

Along those same lines, any committee of the association whose members will receive a copy of an inspection report should also ensure that each member is an HR professional, bound by the same requirements of confidentiality and professional standards. Likewise, the registrar, who holds significant personal information about each member of the association, should be required to hold the same HR designation and be governed by the same requirements for professional confidentiality and conduct. What we need is uniformity throughout the whole organization. You can't have a guy or woman with no qualifications in HR investigating and reporting on an HR person; a professional has to deal with a professional.

Although I have expressed some concerns about how I think certain employees must be treated by their HR professional and I have suggested designations and behaviours for officers and employees of the association itself, I am pleased to support the bill. It's long overdue. For companies, HR people and employees to have a good atmosphere, to have an atmosphere of working together for the betterment for their community, their company and their personal lives, professionals are needed.

I'm pleased to support a bill to ensure that those HR professionals, who can significantly impact the lives of so many of us unknowledgeable employees who need their knowledge to get them through tough times, who are unskilled in many details of their employment lives—these people are the guides through that maze. They will be held to the highest standards of their association. They will be disciplined by their association if they're not fair and they don't do what's right by the employee, or the company for that matter.

This bill provides the extra security to reduce errors that can impact significantly the lives of so many everyday workers. This is an important part of this legislation. It's also good that we've all seen eye to eye in here on this HR bill. I think it's going to help the working people of our province. I think it's going to let companies stand up and take notice that they're being watched and they'll have to treat their employees with respect and fairness. It's a very good thing that's happening. Are there holes in it? Are there things we can improve on? Absolutely, but I'm hoping that as we move forward with this people will come up with more suggestions at committee level or wherever we go with it that will enhance the bill and make it even stronger, to protect the workers of the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm glad to follow the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek—and they let you speak today in the Legislature. I guess the government is not going to speak any further on this bill.

1720

So this is Bill 32, and it's An Act respecting the Human Resources Professionals Association. An earlier

version of this bill was introduced in December 2011, but then prorogation hit so everything was cancelled. The Liberal government then had time to try to change their leaders and cover up their message and their wayward ways with the taxpayers of Ontario. Nothing has really changed, but they've got a new leader right there. So we see Bill 32 back again.

As the member from Prince Edward-Hastings said, it's part of a programming motion and the fact that we collectively got together to put some bills out there that could clear the decks and move the legislation and the Legislature along so we could see what the Liberals might have in mind for the people of Ontario in some type of jobs and economy line. We've yet to see that, but we have cleared the deck for them to bring forward legislation, so we hope that eventually, in time, that does happen.

Bill 32, which we're debating here today, is sponsored by all three parties, so it's one of those times that it's been brought forward, as I said, for the second time by the members for Brampton West, Whitby-Oshawa and Beaches-East York.

It is human resources professionals that play an imperative role in the workplace, and I think more businesses do have human resource professionals that do work for them. It's updating legislation that will hopefully make human resources a career—and those who depend on them. The acronyms are quite long here—I'll try to get into it a little bit here—but the Human Resources Professionals Association, a leading organization representing human resources professionals in Ontario, ensures that its members are competent human resources professionals and that its members act in an ethical manner. As you've heard, there are more than 20,000 members of the Human Resources Professionals Association—

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I don't know if that sneeze got in Hansard, but I'll say, "Bless you."

The Human Resources Professionals Association is represented across 28 chapters throughout the province. These members represent 8,000 different organizations from many different industries and sectors and provide services to two million employed Ontarians. We of course hope there are more employed Ontarians in the coming years than there are right now, but we still have some people that are out there working.

Human resource professionals help our corporate entities thrive in our competitive global marketplace. Not only do they hire employees, but they also train and offer professional development. They work with employees to set goals, improve their performance, ensure that employment and labour laws are followed, that the work environment is safe, and that employees have access to services to improve their health and well-being. They play an important role in any company. With such an extensive reach, it's important that they are properly accredited and held accountable, so the Human Resources Professionals Association grants the certified human

resources professional designation—that's a lot of language; I feel like I'm back in nursing—to its members who have met a high professional standard.

The Human Resources Professionals Association Act of Ontario, 1990, the existing self-regulation act that allows the—I'm going to say "HRPA" now, until further notice—to grant the CHRP, the certified human resources—I'm just going to use those acronyms from now on. It was enacted 23 years ago, so it is time. Human resources professionals' responsibilities, undertaken by those in HR, have certainly changed a great deal, and so we need to update these statutes. As I said, as seems to happen in these minority governments, especially with the Liberals in charge, it takes a long time—longer than is really needed—to get some of these housekeeping bills brought forward and some minor legislative changes made that could help, in this case the HR departments in companies and businesses.

They've certainly gone from the days of just handling payroll administration—they are now on the front lines of dealing with health and safety measures in the workplace, managing labour relations, and safeguarding confidential information about employees. So they're a valuable resource to the workplace, offering support to employees in a variety of ways, mitigating disputes between employees or between an employee and an employer, and understanding the rights of workers. They're also able to direct employees to services that can help them deal with problems outside of work, such as mental illness or family crises. They help to ensure that the workplace is a safe environment not just physically but certainly mentally. They contribute to creating an existing positive atmosphere that helps with productivity and attracts new talent to a company.

They're exposed to some very sensitive and confidential information about a business's employees. As such, they may be held to a very high ethical standard concerning treatment and protection of this information. Employees trust their HR managers to protect that information, which is an important aspect of Bill 32 that we're debating here today: that the bill strengthens the protection of the public by offering assurance that accredited HR professionals follow appropriate standards in all aspects of their work.

The bill also acknowledges the changes that have occurred in the field of human resources since the 1990 version of the act was enacted. The HR profession has had to keep up with an ever-changing workplace and a larger, more diverse workforce today than has ever been before. For example, the way employers are connected with potential employees has changed dramatically—Internet usage. We often tell our young children, "Watch what you say on Facebook, because it's going to follow you maybe forever as you apply for jobs out there." There's Workopolis—we could go on and on about how people look for and find jobs and how employers advertise for jobs.

University and college programs are constantly being created to meet the demands of this increasingly

technology-driven world of work that we live in. Employees have to adapt to and become proficient at computer, smart phone, tablet and other technology. I'm always amazed that the seniors in our ridings, some of whom have to go back to work to actually pay their bills, especially their hydro bills, have adapted to computers and trying to stay somewhat current in the workforce that they may have had to go back to in order to just stay in their house and pay their bills. Through all of these changes, the HR professionals have needed to keep up.

We've also seen a dramatic increase, of course, in the part-time and occasional work offered. So integrating these employees into the HR now—it's unfortunate that under the Liberal government the province of Ontario has lost over 300,000 manufacturing jobs, necessitating lots of adults to have to do Second Career training, if they can get into that. Most people I know, especially in their fifties, who have gotten laid off, lost their jobs, want another job. They're willing, open to training, but especially in rural Ontario we don't have that big array of jobs that we could possibly qualify for. They'd like to get a job. Second Career training works for a small number of them. They need jobs. That's our main job over here, if I can say that, in the PC Party: to create an environment where we can get jobs.

People want jobs. I'm desperate for jobs in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. So is the rest of Ontario. People want to work; opportunities aren't there. We as politicians, people who are making laws, would like to be more in control of making all the laws, but we need to create that climate, a business climate that will create more jobs, instead of driving manufacturers out of the province, driving small businesses out of the province, driving our young people out of the province, out west especially.

There isn't a grandparent that I don't speak to every week in my riding who has a grandchild who has had to go out west—especially in the skilled trades, with the apprenticeship ratios that are strangling our youth—for training for jobs that actually do exist in Ontario. They can get their training and get jobs at a faster pace out west. Let me tell you, the western provinces are saying, "Send us your young. We can train them, we want to train them and we want to give them jobs." That's a sad situation in the province of Ontario.

This bill—I know my time is coming to an end—certainly we support it. It's an update. All three parties support it. Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm proud to contribute the small amount of time I have left on this debate, because my colleagues the members from Welland, Hamilton Mountain, and Hamilton East-Stoney Creek really did a good job in expressing the bill and bringing out some of the things that this bill will do for the industry of human resources. But there's something I want to contribute just before the time is done for debate for our side here.

The member from Beaches–East York had spoken on this bill, and one thing that wasn't mentioned in the bill was that—he was on a committee a couple years ago and he was very surprised that in the last couple of years, the complaints on HR professionals that have come through the Ministry of Labour—not one of those complaints that has come in has been from an HRP member with regards to the way people were handling it.

1730

That's good to know, but this bill, of course, is going to strengthen that record. There's going to be oversight for that group now that they have been designated and regulated. It's just going to make things better for the workplace in general, on both sides. We do support the bill and we look forward to it passing.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Thursday, October 3, 2013, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Dhillon has moved third reading of Bill 32, An Act respecting the Human Resources Professionals Association. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. It will be a five-minute bell.

I have just received a deferral slip "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on third reading of Bill 32 be deferred until deferred votes on Wednesday, November 6."

Third reading vote deferred.

PROTECTION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROTECTION DU DROIT À LA PARTICIPATION AUX AFFAIRES PUBLIQUES

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 25, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 83, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest / *Projet de loi 83, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires, la Loi sur la diffamation et la Loi sur l'exercice des compétences légales afin de protéger l'expression sur les affaires d'intérêt public.*

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I guess I should begin by saying that before I was so rudely interrupted at the end of September, I was debating and doing our lead on Bill 83, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest.

For the sake of the people who were not listening at the end of September, basically, this bill will ensure that public participation can proceed and that individuals who wish to speak out against a proposal or against a politician are not subject to—some people call it a "slander chill," where you get a lawyer's letter that says, "If you speak one more time about this topic, then we're going to hit you with a defamation of character lawsuit that will send you to the poorhouse." Anti-SLAPP legislation, strategic litigation against public participation: If you can remember only that from this debate, then you will be better off.

At the end of September, when I was discussing this legislation, I was giving some examples of why this bill is necessary. The next example I had was quite concerning to us as elected officials, and I think we all need to be aware of the implications. It offers perhaps the most startling, but also clear case, of a SLAPP example that I will discuss here today.

In this case, the claimant was the mayor of an Ontario town and the defendants were members of the town's news media. One of them was also a former councillor with the town. In essence, one of the defendants, well-known for commenting on the town's municipal issues—he also frequently wrote articles dealing with municipal issues as a reoccurring column that was published on the Internet and, often, a local website—focused on current events in the town he lived in.

I'm sure all of us have examples of individuals who do this. In my own community, the Orangeville Banner has two different individuals who write semi-weekly columns commenting on municipal, federal and provincial affairs. I happen to quite enjoy Doug Harkness's columns. He's a good friend and tends to see the world through my view. The second is Rob Strang, who is also a very knowledgeable individual. He also happens to have run against me as a member of the Green Party, so I don't always agree wholeheartedly with his columns. Having said that, I would oppose anybody who suggests that he doesn't have the right to do this. This anti-SLAPP legislation will hopefully do that.

Back to the anti-SLAPP legislation that we were talking about: Throughout the mayor's first term in office, both defendants were vocal critics of the mayor's policies. In 2010, the mayor was running for a second term. Election day was set for October 25. On August 20, 2010, a little over two months from election day, one of the defendants wrote an article that was critical of the mayor and posted it on a website—pretty common these days. In it, he prompted the website's visitors to write over 50 comments about the article. So it was obviously an issue of concern to enough people that they then commented and provided feedback. As is typical with such sites, the comments on an article appear directly beneath the article and are published online as soon as they are submitted. There were many comments on the website in response to the article, and many were far more critical of the mayor than the article itself. Furthermore, many of the commentators used pseudonyms and fake names so they didn't have to identify themselves.

Then, on September 15, 2010, a little over a month from election day, the town's council passed a resolution authorizing the town's solicitor to "retain external legal counsel and to take any and all actions to bring a resolution to the matter" of defamation of the mayor. What this basically meant was that a SLAPP would be commenced against the defendants, and the town would pay for the legal fees since the town's solicitor was retaining the external legal counsel to pursue the legal action.

Surely one can see how, as I mentioned earlier, this particular example gives us perhaps the clearest example of how a SLAPP gets its name. It's pretty hard to find a more clear-cut case of an individual's right to participate in the public process being violated than when an elected politician sues someone for criticizing them.

Speaker, I dare say that just about every other member in this chamber would be embroiled in a SLAPP with one another if this is how we were allowed to operate.

I shouldn't joke, but you get my point. It is preposterous to think that a politician who is elected by the people is so above criticism that their detractors should not dare speak against them, lest they risk being sued. That, Speaker, is a SLAPP.

Anyway, on October 8, 2010, a little over two weeks before the election, the mayor proceeded with his lawsuit. Similar to the last SLAPP example I gave, where I pointed to a lack of legal follow-through on the part of the claimant as further proof that his claim was indeed a SLAPP, here, again, we see a disregard for typical legal procedure.

Bear with me, here, Speaker, because this may seem a little overly technical, but it is definitely an important point that needs to be made. I'll try to get through it relatively quickly, but I certainly hope that my point is not lost on my colleagues. Remember, this legal action was commenced by the mayor a little over two weeks from election day. Typically, most legal actions of this nature are initiated by having what's known as a statement of claim issued. In this case, however, the action was initiated by having a notice of action issued, under what is known as subrule 14.03(2). What does this matter, you may ask? Well, here's why. Because subrule 14.03(2) states the following: "Where there is insufficient time to prepare a statement of claim, an action may be commenced by the issuing of a notice of action ... that contains a short statement of the nature of the claim." So the question is, why was there insufficient time for the mayor to initiate a legal proceeding properly? The answer, I think, is obvious: because the only timeline of relevance was the impending election, which was under three weeks away.

The mayor sued the two defendants, as well as five others, and claimed \$6 million in damages from all of the defendants. Two defendants were served with the notice of action on the same day the action was commenced, October 8, whereas one of the original two defendants was served with the notice of action on Thanksgiving Sunday, October 10, while he was having Thanksgiving dinner with his family.

1740

Here's the catch: Remember subrule 14.03(2) that I just mentioned? Well, there is an accompanying rule, subrule 14.03(4), which very clearly states that, "The notice of action shall not be served separately from the statement of claim." So serving the defendants with the notice of action but no statement of claim directly contravened the rules.

My point of getting down into the weeds like this is not to bore you or my colleagues, Speaker; I promise. No, the reason I bring this up is because it demonstrates quite clearly that in this case, the mayor was far less concerned with taking the appropriate legal action properly and instead far more interested with simply proceeding in any way possible, as long as it was before the election.

It should come as no surprise, then, that one of the defendants swore in an affidavit that the mayor commenced the legal action in order to silence him days before the October 25, 2010, election. Moreover, the mayor did not file an affidavit in response to a motion by the defendants to have their legal costs recovered; nor did the mayor give any evidence that her motive was not to silence her critics as election day quickly approached.

The defendants in this instance outright alleged that this was a SLAPP. Furthermore, the defendants argued that because this was a SLAPP, they were entitled to an elevated award of costs. The master presiding over a motion by the defendants to have the mayor pay for their legal costs ultimately sided with the defendants resoundingly. The master found that the evidence was indisputable. The master was convinced that the mayor brought the lawsuit forward in her capacity as mayor of the corporation and the town. Moreover, because the mayor had access to the town's municipal money until December 14, 2010, the taxpayers, in effect, funded this entire litigation.

This is a totally clear case of a SLAPP being used to silence and/or intimidate those with a different view. And because the party initiating the legal action is a politician, it becomes a SLAPP even more clearly since they have a large, vested interest in silencing their opponents.

Even more shocking in this case is the fact that, technically, this legal action was commenced without complying with the prior notice provisions of the Libel and Slander Act respecting the broadcasts. The mayor expressly sought damages of \$6 million from the defendant, but the presiding master took issue with this, pointing out that, "In an action for damages, it is unusual for the plaintiff to claim a specific amount of damages in the notice of action."

As you can see, Speaker, it is difficult not to see this case from the beginning as nothing more than a desperate and ill-advised scheme to silence the mayor's political opponents. Perhaps more tellingly, the master concluded that the legal action initiated by the mayor was indeed SLAPP litigation.

Ultimately, this SLAPP was put to rest when the mayor dropped the case and delivered a notice of dis-

continuance on October 17, 2011, over a year after it was first initiated. Really, what good did it all serve? Here was this SLAPP sucking precious court resources and time, dragging on for over a year when it had absolutely no credibility. As I was mentioning earlier, this second example I have given is a clear case of an elected or a public official using a SLAPP against an opponent. The mayor was only interested in silencing her critics prior to the election, and she resorted to outrageous measures to do so.

While I have now spoken about an example of a private individual pursuing a SLAPP against another and a public, elected figure pursuing a SLAPP against a private individual, both of whom were trying to silence their critics, now I will go over an example of a corporation pursuing a SLAPP against an individual. This next example is perhaps one of the most infamous, or famous, SLAPP cases in Ontario. Indeed, this case is arguably the inspiration behind the creation of the Anti-SLAPP Advisory Panel that I discussed briefly earlier. I'm referring to the Big Bay Point development project near the township of Innisfil. This case has come to embody the most common perceptions of SLAPPs. It will be worthwhile to go over the details of the case and the multitude of issues surrounding it in order to, again, get a full grasp of these SLAPPs and why it is so important to change the laws to fight them.

In this case, what happened was that a developer, who is the claimant in this case, was planning to acquire approximately 600 acres along Lake Simcoe. The plan was to redevelop the lands over a 15-year period. This extended redevelopment was to cost an approximate \$1.5 billion and the development was to include residential, retail and commercial spaces. There were even plans for a golf course, a hotel, a conference centre, as well as theatres and recreational properties.

Needless to say, this was a very large and very ambitious development proposal. Moreover, as one would imagine, the township of Innisfil and the county of Simcoe were involved in the approval process for the development. In this case, the defendants owned property in the area and, due to a worry about an influx of people and traffic to the area, the defendants publicly opposed the development because they felt it would interfere with their enjoyment of their own private property.

How did this issue get its name, we're wondering? Well, actually a central plank of the development was Big Bay Point Marina. It was imperative to the claimant that they acquire the title of the property. It wasn't just the marina itself that was critical, but also its property, as it represented about 20% of the proposed total development acreage. Without the marina, the development would not be feasible.

The defendants, consequently, set out to do whatever they possibly could to taint the prospects of the claimant purchasing the marina and, thus, moving ahead with their development. Furthermore, the defendants resolved themselves to opposing the development at any cost—certainly their right. In reaction to the defendants'

consistent resistance, the claimant sued the defendants, alleging that the defendants conspired to interfere with the acquisition of the marina.

The claimant's primary argument was that by interfering in the sale of the marina by bidding against the claimant, the defendants forced the claimant to pay extra for multiple contract negotiation deadline extensions. Moreover, the claimant argued that the defendants systematically worked to injure the company and that the defendants' conduct was improper, deceitful and unlawful. The claimant claimed damages of \$10 million for intentional interference with economic relations, \$30 million for conspiracy to injure and \$1 million for punitive damages.

Once again, we have this consistently emerging theme where an individual is trying to do what they think is right for their community and they get hit with a massive lawsuit as a result, to stop them from doing so. In the defendant's statement of defence, he, unsurprisingly, denied all allegations made against him.

Now here is where this particular case gets interesting, because in this example the defendant brings forward his own claim of \$40 million in damages for abuse of process. The defendant also claimed the same amount in damages for conspiracy and special damages estimated at \$250,000, and punitive damages on top of that to the tune of \$10 million.

The defendant's argument here is based around his belief that he suffered irreparable damage and harm to his reputation due to the SLAPP the claimant pursued against him. This is interesting, I think, for a couple of reasons, the first being that it demonstrates that in actuality there is an argument to be made that the legal system already has a process for dealing with SLAPPs, or at least the damage suffered as a result of them.

That being said, I do understand the need for Bill 83 because, as we've all seen by the examples I've listed, these things can take many months or, in most cases, years to resolve. By instituting a timeline to decide if a matter is a SLAPP, Bill 83 will go a long way to ensuring these frivolous claims are taken care of expeditiously.

1750

In the Big Bay Point case we're discussing here, basically the claimant, the developer, sued the defendant for acting against the proposed development, and the defendant responded by not only fighting the legal battles but also by claiming damages as a result of the lawsuit because the defendant alleged that the claimant had abused the legal process. As I said, the defendant argued that the claimant had abused the legal process, and laid out the following argument supporting his claim: that the legal action brought forward by the claimant on December 15, 2005, alleging intentional interference with economic interests and conspiracy to injure was a false civil action because it was based on false evidence; that the legal action was brought forward to advance indirect and improper purposes such as pressuring the defendant into not expressing his thoughts and beliefs publicly concerning the development—the hope was that the defendant

would be pressured into not publicly opposing the development—and that initially the claimant had approached the defendant with a view to convincing the defendant to support the development.

To put it another way, Speaker: Basically, the claimant went to the defendant, knowing he lived near the development, and tried to convince him to publicly support and endorse the development, and when the defendant did not, the claimant sued him. One can argue, therefore, that the resulting lawsuit is a false action because it was based on no true facts and is not designed to hold up in court but rather to strongly intimidate the defendant into either not commenting on the development or supporting it outright. In other words, the resulting lawsuit had, at least on its face, many characteristics commonly associated with SLAPPs. To make matters worse, the defendant argued that the claimant also spread and publicized the allegations it brought against the defendant, with the aim of tarnishing defendant's reputation in the community.

In the Big Bay Point example I've just gone over, legal action was commenced on December 15, 2005, and the defendant's action to dismiss the case was not heard until August 1, 2006—some six and a half months or so later. In that specific instance, the motion to dismiss the case was, in fact, dismissed itself, and thus the legal action was able to continue. It wasn't until 2012—Speaker, seven years after the first legal action—that the last of the lawsuits in the Big Bay Point example have finally been settled. The developer sued for more than \$150 million in nine separate cases but never took a single one of these cases to trial. That is a classic indication of a SLAPP. The Big Bay Point example can be viewed as a classic example of a company pursuing a SLAPP against an individual or individuals for the purpose of silencing them on matters of importance to the company.

We've now gone over three different possible SLAPP examples: one a private individual pursuing a SLAPP against another private individual; one a public elected officer pursuing a SLAPP against his critics; and one a large development company attempting to silence critics of its proposal through the courts. I think this is very instructive because it demonstrates that a SLAPP is not always a big development company trying to silence environmentalists. This is an often-held stereotype that is, quite frankly, not true, as I have demonstrated here today. While, yes, there are instances like Big Bay Point where the situation follows that narrative, there are also vastly different contexts for SLAPPs as well. My point here is that a SLAPP is something that could be pursued by a variety of players for a variety of reasons, all of which have to do with silencing opponents' views. That is important to bear in mind when considering Bill 83 because it becomes particularly relevant to institute a mechanism for addressing potential SLAPPs, and that is something I believe Bill 83 does.

I'd be remiss, Speaker, if I did not mention that in the Big Bay Point case, when the judge was deciding on

awarding costs—it does say in the decision that this legal action was technically not a SLAPP. Far be it from me to challenge the legal opinion of a judge; however, my point is that these lawsuits bogged down our already-jammed court system for seven years, and not a single individual went to trial. There's something severely wrong with that situation, Speaker. That is why Bill 83's proposal to institute a 60-day time limit on deciding whether a lawsuit is a SLAPP is a critical component of this legislation.

That's not the only good proposal in Bill 83, and I'd like to take some time now to go over the bill itself. Now that we've had a chance to review some of the common examples of SLAPPs, I think the viewers at home and my colleagues here in the chamber will perhaps have a better understanding of how Bill 83 could help remedy the problem SLAPPs pose.

Bill 83, the Protection of Public Participation Act, sets out to combat SLAPPs by amending multiple pieces of legislation basically to create a process to determine if a lawsuit is a SLAPP and to have it dismissed accordingly if it is. In order to set up this process, Bill 83 amends the Courts of Justice Act to allow for fast-tracking of motions to determine whether legal actions are, in fact, credible SLAPPs. Essentially, how Bill 83 will work, if enacted, is that if a defendant believes that they have been targeted by a SLAPP, they will be able to bring forward a motion to have the presiding judge determine if the legal action qualifies as a SLAPP. If the judge determines the action to be a SLAPP, then the judge shall dismiss the legal action at that point. It remains incumbent on the defendant, however, to prove that the legal action brought against them is, in fact, a SLAPP. If they are unsuccessful in proving this to the judge, however, then their motion will be dismissed, and the case can proceed.

It's also important to note that, when rendering a decision to this motion, the judge would be able to award compensation regarding costs on the motion if they deem it appropriate. Moreover, the judge would also be able to award the defendant damages as the judge considered appropriate, if the judge determined that the claimant brought the initial legal action forward in bad faith.

A key component of Bill 83, however, is the 60-day timeline it passes on the motion for determining if a legal action is a SLAPP and can proceed. This timeline is essential for ensuring that SLAPPs do not bog down our already-overburdened court system any further. By instituting a 60-day timeline for a decision, Bill 83 ensures that vexatious and unwarranted SLAPP suits are dismissed expeditiously. That's a central premise of Bill 83 and an important one.

Another reason why the 60-day timeline on the hearing of the motion proposed under Bill 83 is so critical is due to the tribunal connection that Bill 83 establishes. I will confess this is one section of the bill that does make me somewhat uneasy. Bill 83 establishes that if the claimant has proceedings before a tribunal like the OMB, then the defendant moving the motion to dismiss the legal proceedings can provide written notice to the

respective tribunal informing them of the filed motion. At that point, the claimant's proceedings at the tribunal are deemed to be stayed until the motion is dealt with. My reservations come from the thought that this measure could potentially lead to backups at multiple other tribunals because, in theory, you could have multiple instances of these motions being filed and thus multiple proceedings being stayed at other tribunals. Again, though, this is why the 60-day timeline is so critical because we must always be mindful that balance is the key to situations like this. If there is no 60-day timeline, then a claimant's tribunal proceedings could all be stayed indefinitely while the motion proceeds, only to be vindicated in the end if the motion was dismissed. That wouldn't be right, so having the 60-day timeline ensures that these motions are dealt with.

Bill 83 amends two other pieces of legislation: the Libel and Slander Act, and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act. The Statutory Powers Procedure Act is amended to provide that submissions for costs shall be made in writing. The Libel and Slander Act amendment, however, is somewhat more significant. This act is amended to establish new privileges for certain individuals who do not have a direct interest in the matter of public interest. This is actually an important amendment as far as completing the goals of Bill 83: actually protecting public participation.

You see, as it stands currently, there are current privileges regarding oral or written communication that

are possessed by individuals who have a direct interest in the matter of public interest. What Bill 83 does is to amend the Libel and Slander Act to extend these privileges to individuals, reporters recounting or repeating any discussions on the matter, or those who do possess a direct interest in the matter. This is important, because if a journalist is writing a story on something an individual said at a public meeting, while that individual could have been discussing a matter that they have a direct interest in and would be fairly protected from legal action, the journalist would technically not be protected, as they arguably do not possess a direct interest but, rather, an indirect interest.

Journalism and reporting are tenets of a healthy democracy. If we are serious about protecting public participation, we absolutely must also protect the sanctity of the press to report on the news of the day and on the issues important to the local citizens.

Ultimately, the PC caucus stands behind the rights of individuals to express their opinions, and this is—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'm sorry, but the time has come—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I was so close.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I know.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Continued from back cover

Visitors

Mr. Jonah Schein.....	4218
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	4218

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Local Food Act, 2013, Bill 36, Ms. Wynne / Loi de 2013 sur les aliments locaux, projet de loi 36, Mme Wynne

Third reading agreed to.....	4218
------------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	4218
-------------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Frank Stronach

Mr. Frank Klees	4218
-----------------------	------

Climate change

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	4219
-----------------------	------

Veterans

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	4219
------------------------------	------

Road safety

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	4219
------------------------	------

Steel industry

Miss Monique Taylor.....	4219
--------------------------	------

Emerging Leaders Network

Ms. Mitzie Hunter	4220
-------------------------	------

Tobacco control

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	4220
------------------------	------

Pan Am Games

Mr. Bill Mauro	4220
----------------------	------

Canadian Automobile Association

Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	4221
------------------------	------

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Government Agencies

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	4221
Report deemed adopted.....	4221

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Lung Cancer Awareness Month

Hon. Deborah Matthews	4221
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	4222
Mme France Gélinas	4223

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Air quality

Ms. Sylvia Jones.....	4223
-----------------------	------

All-terrain vehicles

Mr. Michael Mantha.....	4224
-------------------------	------

Small business

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	4224
------------------------------	------

Darlington nuclear generating station

Mr. John O'Toole	4224
------------------------	------

Environmental protection

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	4224
-------------------------	------

Waste reduction

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	4225
------------------------------	------

Social assistance

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	4225
------------------------	------

Office of the Ombudsman

Miss Monique Taylor	4225
---------------------------	------

Waste reduction

Mr. John Fraser	4225
-----------------------	------

Tire disposal

Mr. John O'Toole	4225
------------------------	------

Taxation

Ms. Sarah Campbell	4226
--------------------------	------

Government's record

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	4226
------------------------	------

Ontario Ranger Program

Mr. Michael Mantha.....	4226
-------------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Registered Human Resources Professionals Act, 2013, Bill 32, Mr. Dhillon, Mr. Prue, Mrs. Elliott / Loi de 2013 sur les professionnels en ressources humaines inscrits, projet de loi 32, M. Dhillon, M. Prue, Mme Elliott

Mr. Vic Dhillon.....	4227
Ms. Sylvia Jones.....	4228
Ms. Cindy Forster.....	4230
Hon. David Zimmer	4232

Mr. Rick Nicholls	4233
Miss Monique Taylor	4234
Mr. Todd Smith	4235
Mr. Paul Miller	4237
Ms. Laurie Scott	4239
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	4240
Third reading vote deferred	4241

**Protection of Public Participation Act, 2013, Bill 83,
Mr. Gerretsen / Loi de 2013 sur la protection du
droit à la participation aux affaires publiques,
projet de loi 83, M. Gerretsen**

Ms. Sylvia Jones	4241
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	4245

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 5 November 2013 / Mardi 5 novembre 2013

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Waste Reduction Act, 2013, Bill 91, Mr. Bradley / Loi de 2013 sur la réduction des déchets, projet de loi 91, M. Bradley

Mr. Robert Bailey	4197
Mr. Jonah Schein	4198
Hon. Liz Sandals	4199
Mr. John O'Toole	4199
Mr. Todd Smith	4199
Mr. Robert Bailey	4199
Mr. John Vanthof	4200
Hon. Jeff Leal	4201
Mr. John O'Toole	4201
Ms. Catherine Fife	4201
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	4202
Mr. John Vanthof	4202
Ms. Sylvia Jones	4202
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	4203
Mr. Bob Delaney	4204
Mr. Rick Nicholls	4204
Ms. Cindy Forster	4204
Ms. Sylvia Jones	4204
Mr. Monte McNaughton	4205
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	4206

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	4206
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	4206
Mr. Peter Shurman	4206
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4206
Mr. Michael Harris	4206
Mr. Steven Del Duca	4206
Mr. Robert Bailey	4206
Mr. Percy Hatfield	4206
Mr. Grant Crack	4207
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	4207
Mr. Jonah Schein	4207
Hon. Jeff Leal	4207
Mr. John Yakabuski	4207
Mr. John Fraser	4207

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Ontario economy

Mr. Tim Hudak	4207
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4207

Ontario economy

Mr. Victor Fedeli	4208
Hon. Charles Sousa	4208

Public transit

Ms. Andrea Horwath	4209
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4209

Job creation

Ms. Andrea Horwath	4210
Hon. Eric Hoskins	4210
Hon. Charles Sousa	4210

Cancer treatment

Mr. Ted Chudleigh	4210
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4210

Cancer treatment

Mr. Taras Natyshak	4211
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4211

Skills training

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri	4211
Hon. Brad Duguid	4212

Ontario College of Trades

Mr. Garfield Dunlop	4212
Hon. Brad Duguid	4212

Protection for workers

Mr. Jonah Schein	4213
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4213

Biodiversity

Mr. Steven Del Duca	4214
Hon. David Orazietti	4214

Horse racing industry

Mr. Tim Hudak	4214
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4215

Horse racing industry

Ms. Andrea Horwath	4215
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4215

Road safety

Mr. Bas Balkissoon	4216
Hon. Glen R. Murray	4216

Drive Clean

Mr. Michael Harris	4216
Hon. James J. Bradley	4217

Workplace Safety

Ms. Catherine Fife	4217
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4217
Hon. Brad Duguid	4217

Continued on inside back cover

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Mercredi 6 novembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 6 November 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 6 novembre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 30, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario's school system / Projet de loi 122, Loi concernant la négociation collective dans le système scolaire de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to join the debate and offer the PC lead on Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. Mr. Speaker, when I became the critic for education, just more than a month ago, I expected that I would be engaged in the government's education agenda quite readily and speedily as the critic. But what I thought we would be talking about in education are some of the things that are perhaps lacking in our school systems. We have, certainly, some questions related to how our teachers are being hired with regulation 274. We have questions with respect to our test scores and what seems to be happening in our schools today with test scores not performing as well as they might.

We could talk about a number of different things that are problematic in our education system, yet since I've been appointed as the PC critic for education, we've been faced with two particular pieces of legislation. This piece of legislation, which is called the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, deals with the collective bargaining process for teachers and their schools, and school boards and the government. We're also dealing with an Ontario College of Teachers bill which talks about strengthening the process and the regulations by which we entrust the Ontario College of Teachers. These are two pieces of legislation that the government has brought forward in the education field, and I would suggest that contrary to my previously stated objective, which is to help improve our education system here in the province of Ontario,

what we're dealing with are really what amount to process bills: a process for collective bargaining and a process for disputing whether we should license certain teachers or not in the Ontario College of Teachers bill that we've started debate on already in this Legislature. Nothing has been said, nothing has been done to talk about some of the ailments in our system.

I'm going to talk a bit about those in a few minutes, but I think that if we are to have an honest conversation about education—and we like to have conversations in this Legislature—we should talk about those matters which are perhaps not all well and good in our education system, and try to address those problems and those concerns.

Ultimately, when we hear about education from our constituents, it's often coming from parents who have certain concerns about what's happening in our schools: whether our schools are safe and nurturing places to foster and nurture a child's natural curiosity to learn, whether parents are happy with what their students are learning. These are the kinds of concerns that are brought to members of this Legislature all the time in their constituency work, yet we're confronted with two pieces of legislation that essentially do not address some of those prevailing concerns. That, by way of introductory remarks, is a criticism I'm going to level at this government.

Let's start getting on with fixing our education system. Let's try to have some legislation in place that will actually improve test scores. Let's do that, and we need to do that sooner rather than later. So I hope that the next time the government introduces an education bill, they're doing so with the lens of trying to fix the problems that are inherent—the problems that exist—in our education system.

I also have to say, by the way of introductory remarks, Mr. Speaker, that our PC caucus has done what I think has been a pretty historic move with a programming motion that we had passed in this Legislature to clear the decks, to try to see whether the government does in fact have an economic plan, to see whether those ideas about kick-starting the private sector and the job growth that needs to happen in our private sector are brought forward. This is another example of a piece of legislation that does not address the prevailing jobs crisis, economic crisis and fiscal crisis in the province of Ontario. This is what we hoped the government would do, once we passed that programming motion. We hoped they would say, "Yes, we need to act on the economy."

I guess, Mr. Speaker, we're pinning our hopes that in tomorrow's economic update we're going to have some

semblance of an idea that the government is prepared to fix the economy. But we've already heard from the finance minister that he's not tabling any legislation that's going to actually do that. If that's the case, Mr. Speaker, I think we owe it to the people of Ontario to roll up our sleeves and talk about the kinds of laws and policies that will enable job growth in the private sector to happen—that would be a good start—and to actually have a plan in place to balance this province's books when the time indeed does come.

In debating the context of Bill 122, we can't ignore what's transpiring in this Legislature as we speak today: no jobs plan and no education policy that's actually going to address the prevailing problems we face in our education system.

Mr. Speaker, the government likes to talk about its partners in education, and obviously this piece of legislation is designed to make peace with those partners in education. I just want to spend a little bit of time talking about exactly the scope of what is happening in our education system today.

As of 2012-13, the year that just passed, the number of students in Ontario was 2,031,205. That's a lot of students. That's a lot of families who have their children in the education system. I think what I would suggest is that if we are talking about partners in education, we obviously have to be addressing the kinds of concerns our students in the system are facing—2,031,205 as of last year. We also had, at the end of last year, 3,978 elementary schools and 913 secondary schools in the province of Ontario. The government's total investment in education is \$21 billion, and a total capital investment of \$1.4 billion.

0910

Mr. Speaker, the scope of this ministry is very big. It affects moms and dads. It obviously affects the ability of a government to manage the fiscal issues it has incurred. Those fiscal issues have been voiced by many members, particularly in the opposition, who believe we need to do something to fix and avert our fiscal crisis before we have to make some difficult decisions. That's what the members of the PC caucus are very concerned about. We want a well-funded and well-resourced education system. That's going to be challenged by the lack of fiscal discipline on that side of the House. We're not going to be able to do what we want in education if we continue to spend money we don't have and kick the can further down the road of economic ruin.

We have in our system approximately 115,000 full-time teachers, full-time equivalents. We have 7,326 administrators: principals and vice-principals. We have 4,390 ECEs, or early childhood educators, in our school system. That's a large number of people who are affected by the kinds of policies we are creating in this Legislature. Not only do we have more than 2 million students, our kids, in the system, but we have more than 100,000 people who are directly employed in this sector. So it's a very big issue that we have to face here, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the growing demands of our elementary and secondary schools.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for overseeing all aspects of Ontario's public education system. Ontario's Education Act sets out the duties and responsibilities of the minister, the school boards, supervisory officers, principals, teachers, parents and students. It's important, as this piece of legislation talks about solidifying the role of the crown or the role of the ministry in the collective bargaining process, to understand exactly what they do.

The ministry is responsible for setting policies and guidelines for school boards; for allocating funding to school boards using a funding formula; for establishing the provincial curriculum; for setting the requirements for graduation, for diplomas and certificates; and for creating lists of approved textbooks and other resources to be used by teachers and by students in the classroom.

In addition to the ministry obviously having a role in our system, they are also the funder of how we pay for the system. More than \$20 billion, as I previously noted, is being spent in our education system today. That number is more than \$8.5 billion more than occurred in 2003, so spending is significantly up in this sector. The question we're going to talk about and explore a little bit more is whether we have in fact received our bang for the buck, whether that increased investment has led to what I think all parents want, which is improving the quality of education for our students and our kids. I think the jury's out on that. I know the government likes to talk about gains in the system, but I'm going to spend some time talking about some of the, maybe, myths about the gains they have currently. It is what it is.

Another aspect of this bill talks about the partners of education being the school boards. The school boards are the people who are entrusted, the employers of our teachers and our administrators and our early childhood educators in all regions of the province of Ontario. They obviously perform a particular task and particular role.

There are 72 school boards in the province of Ontario: 31 English public, 29 English Catholic, four French public and eight French Catholic. There are also several school authorities that oversee schools in hospitals, treatment centres and remote regions of the province. There's a vast array of folks who are involved in education today, not just the students and the teachers, but also from the employer's side on our school boards, that we obviously have to recognize and reconcile when we're having a debate on this particular issue.

In terms of who does what, we talked a bit about what the Ministry of Education does; perhaps it's instructive to talk a little bit about what school boards are responsible for. They're responsible for deciding how to spend the funds they receive from the province for things like hiring teachers and other staff, building and maintaining schools, and purchasing school supplies. School boards are responsible for deciding where new schools should be built, and when and if schools should close. School boards provide programs in schools such as special education, programs for newcomers and French immersion programs that I think a lot of people take advantage of.

They're responsible for developing local educational policy. Local educational policy is particularly related to safe schools, to homework guidelines and the like. They're responsible for setting an annual balanced budget for the school board. I know some school boards have complained about their lack of ability, given the resources provided by the government, to actually do that, and particularly when we see governments coming into the collective bargaining process and ignoring what school boards are dealing with, as happened through Bill 115.

Our school boards are also responsible for ensuring schools follow the rules that are set out by the Education Act. Obviously, that is an act of this Legislature. Certainly, the Ministry of Education is very concerned about making sure that the Education Act is followed, and school boards are in many ways the police that make sure that it happens.

Finally—at least finally on this page—school boards are responsible for establishing a school council at each school and a parent involvement committee of the board. I think that this is obviously a very important component of this, particularly when we're talking about partners in education.

The government has instituted a process through Bill 122, the bill that we're debating today, where the government's going to be a party to the negotiations, the school boards are going to be party to the negotiations and the respective teachers' federations are going to be party to the negotiations that we face. Three parties to the negotiation process will be institutionalized should Bill 122 pass this Legislature.

One growing concern that I have is the fact that those very parents, many of whom volunteer their time after completing a day's work, who try to make sure their students and their schools have the kinds of things that parents expect from their schools, have been seemingly shut out of this process and this discussion of being included as partners in this whole discussion about partners in education. I'm concerned about the fact that the very people who are going to be most affected by the kinds of things that are going to be talked about have very little role in the setting of education policy in the province of Ontario. We should be doing more to consult parents, not less. We shouldn't be shutting them out of the process; we should be including them. I think that if we're looking at how we can address the contents of this bill, we might well think about the role of our parents and our students in our education system and including them among the list of who we would consider as partners in the education system.

My water arrived a little late, Mr. Speaker. I was hoping I would have a cup before I started.

0920

We also have trustees. I know that the bill talks about the role of trustee associations in the collective bargaining process, obviously something we need to consider as well. School trustees are officials, elected every four years during municipal elections, who serve on school

boards. Their cycle is every four years, and their elections are about to occur next year, which I think is an important marker. Trustees are responsible for setting the school board's overall policy direction and the board's budget, and they represent the interests of the community, parents and students in their area.

I don't know how many members of the Legislature have actually visited their local school board in the course of being the MPP for their area, but I would certainly encourage that to happen, because there are interesting things that are brought up at those meetings that, in the absence of actually attending, you probably wouldn't know about. I learned a lot. I think it has been about half a year since I've been to one of our school boards in a school board meeting where—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'm having trouble hearing your own member. If you would like a little trio talk, go outside and do it, please.

Continue.

Mr. Rob Leone: Would it help, Mr. Speaker, if I spoke a little louder?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You might want to talk to your friends.

Mr. Rob Leone: Okay.

As I mentioned, trustees are responsible for setting the school board's overall policy direction. They represent the interests of the community, parents and students in their communities. Like I was saying, Mr. Speaker, before I was interrupted by you and my colleagues—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's my job to interrupt you when you're doing something wrong. Thank you for that notification.

Continue.

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, as soon as I said that, I realized I had made a little bit of a mistake, so I will slap myself on the wrist.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —ever, ever, ever, ever do that again.

Mr. Rob Leone: The member for Nepean–Carleton suggests that I should apologize to the Speaker, and I will take that offer, Mr. Speaker. I'm very sorry for perhaps questioning your authority, which I wasn't intending to do in the first place, and I won't ever, ever, ever, ever do it again—I think that was the other part.

Back to Bill 122, I think, would be a better place to start. You know, Mr. Speaker, I think that what the government is trying to do with Bill 122 is certainly to grab hold of this monstrosity of a ministry that deals with lots of students, lots of teachers, lots of trustees and, most importantly, I think, lots of families who are deeply wedded to what's happening in our schools.

I would say that if we are to set some priorities, we should do so in the following manner: We should do so by judging each and every piece of legislation by how it improves test scores and the quality of education of our students, and the respect we afford and allot to our educators, who are certainly performing miracles every day in our classrooms, and how we can properly resource

our teachers to not only do the job they're currently doing, but do it even better. How we can discuss mechanisms by which that occurs, I think, is very important in how we can judge and assess education policy going forward.

Mr. Speaker, I think we also have to judge the policies that come before us based on what parents might be saying. I think we have to have a mechanism by which we understand precisely what parents are saying about what's happening in our schools. You know, I'm deeply concerned about some of the things I'm hearing as an MPP. I hope that some of the things I'm hearing aren't actually happening in my son's school, and I think that is the case, to a large degree. But when we hear some of these disturbing stories that are happening in our schools, we have to have the ability to talk about policies and the direction of policies that can actually eliminate those problems. Through the process we've seen, which has unfolded, we're dealing with legislation, again, that I think strays from those priorities.

We cannot ignore the context by which Bill 122 has been introduced in this Legislature. I know that the government has done its best effort and has conducted its best efforts, in the last round of negotiation, to try and rein in the seemingly endless increases in expenses in our education system, which is what led to Bill 115. One cannot ignore, in debating this piece of legislation, Bill 122, the context in which Bill 115 had occurred.

I will state very clearly that our party did support Bill 115. We supported Bill 115 because it was the first acknowledgement by this government that we actually have a fiscal crisis in the province of Ontario, and that there needed to be corrective action taken to ensure that we would actually protect education by making sure we're making prudent financial decisions today so that my kids, when they're going through their school, have an education system that we all can be proud of.

So we supported that piece of legislation, even though it wasn't our preferred piece of legislation. We don't want to be pitting teachers against nurses against police officers against MPPs and other public servants. We believe that it was the appropriate move to freeze public sector wages across the board for two years. I think that approach was an approach that would have been a lot easier to swallow if everyone was in the battle together, if we all joined hands, if we're arm in arm battling the fiscal crisis that is still before us.

In the course of doing that, Mr. Speaker, in the process of doing what they did with Bill 115, of course, the government irritated its partners in education. We're not just simply talking about the teachers' federations. I know my friends in the NDP will probably have a lot more to say about this particular part. The teachers' federations were upset about the process that they were forced to submit to. But the school boards themselves were also upset. They were sidestepped; they had to implement an agreement without actually having any input into the process.

I realize what the government is trying to do here. They obviously want to make sure that we are correcting

some of the issues that have emerged since Bill 115 and in the process that unfolded therefrom. I will say that one of the things I like about this legislation is that it actually does that. It sets out the roles and responsibilities of the government, of the teachers' federations and of the school boards. Now, whether the government has it right in terms of every little bit that's in this bill—I think the jury is still out on that; I don't know.

Like I said earlier, I was in this position to talk about education policy and improving our schools and improving our students' test scores, not about debating the minutiae of collective bargaining. I would say that I'm more of an expert in education policy and less in understanding of how collective bargaining works. I've never been at the central table. I'm not a labour lawyer. I think the labour lawyers and the negotiators are probably going to have more to say about this piece of legislation than I could, and I think that is an important aspect that we have to understand.

We are trying to institutionalize, in this bill, the process that unfolded prior to Bill 115, which is that there were voluntary framework agreements that happened between the government and the teachers' federations that ended up being the basis by which local collective agreements would occur. Now we are institutionalizing that process and formalizing the government's role in doing that. I think the government actually needs to be there; I've said that a couple of times already. The government funds education in the province of Ontario. They need to have a say in how it transpires. From that perspective, it's something that I like about the bill.

0930

But what I will suggest, Mr. Speaker, is that if we are looking at how this bill might transpire and what we can say about the various aspects of this legislation, we aren't going to really know how this bill will play out until we've actually done a complete negotiation, a cycle of negotiation. I would say that. I'm not a labour expert, but I would say that given the people whom I've talked to on this piece of legislation, whether it's the teachers' federations, whether it's school board officials, whether it's parents, the one thing that I would say is that we're actually not going to know the details of how this legislation is going to unfold and whether the rules actually make sense to the parties that are involved until we actually complete one round of negotiation.

So I would suggest, by way of improving this piece of legislation, that we should include some provision to review this legislation after one cycle of bargaining is complete. I think including a sunset provision or a review clause in this piece of legislation will strengthen it. It would give an opportunity for the "partners in education" to come before the legislative committee or to consult with the ministry officials about the kinds of things that worked with this piece of legislation and the kinds of things that perhaps need to be modified. I think if the government is really interested in improving this piece of legislation, they would actually focus on perhaps this idea. Let's call everybody in after the process is done. Let's see what worked.

Perhaps we could do it in a legislative committee; perhaps we could do it by way of ministerial consultation and conversation. I'd like to use that word—have kind of sullied the word in my vocabulary, but I'll still use the word "conversation" with these partners to see whether or not it's transpired and it's worked out in quite the way they intended.

As a member of the Legislature who has not participated directly at the negotiation table, the kinds of rules that are established in this piece of legislation—and it's a lengthy piece of legislation; I think I picked it up on the way in. I'm going to be searching quite a while for the pieces of paper here, Mr. Speaker. I don't have a copy, but it's quite a lengthy piece of legislation. You can't actually read this piece of legislation without understanding labour law and the Labour Relations Act, which I think, certainly, the Minister of Labour is probably the noted expert here on that.

It's a very technical bill, and I think that is certainly—I wouldn't say a problem I have with it, because obviously you need to have some of these rules established, but it's hard to, in some ways, criticize a bill without having the expertise and knowledge and wherewithal to see how these kinds of rules play out. So I would suggest that there's some room for improvement on this piece of legislation coming forward—here it is; it's a few pages long.

As I mentioned, Bill 122 talks about the role of central versus local bargaining. I listened intently when the minister was making her remarks and when the parliamentary assistant was making her remarks on this. It talks about the various roles, the central versus local bargaining. There is obviously a need and a role for the government to be a party to this. I think we would say, on this side of the House, that there's some reasonable expectation as the people paying the bills that we're actually going to do this. Like I said, there's a part of the bill that I think we can certainly have some agreement on.

It establishes the bargaining representatives, so there's a section of the bill that talks about the bargaining representatives from the labour perspective, the AEFO, ETFO, OECTA and the OSSTF, which are four broadly defined teacher federations that will be party to the central negotiating table with the corresponding trustee associations that are going to be party to it as well, as well as the crown.

There is a local bargaining component that's still maintained between the school board and their teacher federation locals that I understand the teacher federations want to preserve and to maintain. I think that the bill reflects at least that acknowledgement that local bargaining still needs to take place, and I think that's well established.

I think that there are issues around the support staff in central bargaining that obviously were previously left out. I know sometimes we talk to these organizations and support staff directly. It always seems that it's about the teacher federations and not the support staff and to what extent support staff need to have an ability to negotiate as well.

These are the sorts of things that the bill includes, that are obviously—as I suggest, I think we need to see it play out before we can actually understand whether things are going in a particular direction.

I want to talk about some of the things that I think the bill is lacking. First of all, as I suggested earlier, this is about process. It's about setting out the rules and establishing the authority.

I know that some of the criticism I've heard, particularly on this bill, is that there's too much left to the discretion of the Minister of Education with respect to some of the rules that are at play. I don't know, again, not being a party to the negotiating process, how that criticism actually plays out in real life. That's why I would like to see the process unfold before we come back and review whether the latitude we've been giving to the Minister of Education has been and is appropriate to the process itself.

Mr. Speaker, what I've tried to assert several times during the last half hour is that I think what parents want to talk about is improving the schools. Since we're talking about process, we're not talking about how we can do that: how we can improve student test scores, how we can improve our schools, how we can help our teachers do the tasks that we entrust them with by teaching our students. We haven't seen that in this bill.

This isn't about improving any gains that the government purports to have made in education. We have no understanding of how this bill will actually encourage that. It's not about understanding how we grapple with the fiscal pressures that we find in the province of Ontario today. We're spending \$8.5 billion more in education in the last 10 years. Meanwhile, we have 250,000 fewer students in our schools. Do the purported gains that the government likes to talk about correspond with that increase in money spent? Do we see our test scores improving?

I want to spend a little bit of time talking about that particular issue. What this bill does not do, when we're talking about the fiscal pressures this government faces, is understand how we can actually deal with those problems. This bill does not talk about that at all. In fact, what I think I'm hearing from the government is quite the opposite: that when it comes to regulation 274 and amending it, that's going to be subject to the negotiating table. Well, if that's going to be subject to the negotiating table, and if we're going to talk about everything else with education policy being subjected to the negotiating table, then what are we doing in this Legislature?

We're supposed to be debating what we can do to improve our schools, to improve our student test scores, to help build confidence with parents in our education system. If those tools are going to be taken away because we're relegating all of this to the collective bargaining process, then I would suggest that we have some significant issues with respect to that, because there is legislation that we can implement in this Legislature that actually does improve schools, that will improve student test scores and will do a whole lot more than simply

taking a hands-off approach on this. And if this bill is intended to ensure that all aspects of education policy will not be subjected to legislation from this Legislature and actually be totally removed from this Legislature and only at the hands of the collective bargaining table, then, again, Mr. Speaker, there are certain issues that we would have with that process.

0940

Let's talk about those gains. I note with interest that I have been looking at some of the test scores, and the international comparisons of those test scores. We can talk about the PISA test scores, which we're going to get to in a little bit. But at least five countries and provinces performed better than the province of Ontario, which is, I think, pretty good. We're at least among the top, which is important. That's for reading. For mathematics—which is a growing concern; I know that our test scores or results in mathematics are on the decline—our PISA results show that Ontario is the 12th highest jurisdiction. So we're obviously faring a lot worse in mathematics. International statistics are suggesting that we are lacking in our math skills. I think there's certainly a concern that is expressed with that.

I know in the remarks that the member from Trinity-Spadina made on Bill 122, he addressed the problem about declining math scores, and he suggested an idea that I think is worthy of consideration: whether we should have specialized math teachers in our schools teaching mathematics. I think that's an idea that I would like to actually have a debate about in this Legislature. But at the end of the day, we're talking about process. We're not talking about how we can improve results in math. I think the member raises a very interesting point.

If we look at the change of our PISA test scores over the last number of years, our reading scores since 2000—and you have to remember who was in power in the year 2000—have actually declined. They've gone down by two points—on a raw score of two points on a year-over-year comparison. Our mathematics score has gone up just slightly by, again, two points. Our science scores have improved as well.

There are certainly concerns that over time—which I'm going to get to in the next international comparison I'm going to make, in terms of where we fare on the TIMSS test. I'm not talking about the leader of the official opposition here. We're not talking about him, because he would certainly outperform a lot of the scores and a lot of measures that we've seen here. But the TIMSS test results on grade 4 mathematics show that 20 jurisdictions in the world are outperforming the province of Ontario. Actually, we're doing worse; we're in the middle of the pack now with our grade 4 math scores. Those are 2011 results. In grade 8 mathematics, there's a slight improvement: 16 jurisdictions around the world are actually doing better than what's happening right here in the province of Ontario—16 jurisdictions. I remember during the last election campaign we were told that we were the best jurisdiction in the English-speaking world, but certainly the international indicators have suggested otherwise.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I noticed in one of the trends in the TIMSS test results is, if we look at the trends in Canadian provinces for grade 8 mathematics achievement, the best scores that we received—continually, from 1995 to 2003, our scores were going up. In 1995, the year we took power, the score was at 501. By 1999, it improved to 517. By 2003, our test scores in grade 8 mathematics got up to 521. Today, it's down to 512. So during our time in power, we saw grade 8 math scores actually improve. Yet, despite spending \$8.5 billion more in education today, we're seeing our grade 8 math scores decline under this government. Grade 4 science scores: 18 jurisdictions in the world scored better on grade 4 science than the province of Ontario. Florida, the Russian Federation, Finland and Singapore all scored better than the province of Ontario.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Florida?

Mr. Rob Leone: Yes, Florida. Florida used to be at the very bottom of the US test scores and has now surpassed even Ontario.

Grade 8 science tests, the TIMSS scores for 2011: 19 jurisdictions fared better than the province of Ontario. If we look at trends in Canadian provinces for science, the same trend appears to have taken place. In Ontario from 1995 to 2003, we saw test scores increase, but from 2003 to 2011, we've seen them decrease, this despite the fact that we spend today \$8.5 billion more in education. Where are the results going, Mr. Speaker?

Grade 8 science achievement: Again, the trends show a particular phenomenon. The raw score in 1995 for grade 8 science achievement was 496, in 1999 it was 518 and in 2003 it was 533. In 2007 it went down to 526 and in 2011 it went down to 521, this despite spending \$8.5 billion more in education today than they did 10 years ago. Where has the money gone?

All the while, we see that we have these EQAO test results, and every year, for reading and writing, those scores have gone up. The EQAO, which is a provincial standardized test instituted by our government, has shown a significant increase, which is contrary to what these international results, the PISA and the TIMSS results, are showing right here in the province of Ontario. One has to wonder, when looking at this data, how can that possibly be? How could it possibly be that the international comparisons are showing that Ontario is on the decline, but our provincial standards show us going up? One has to have a serious and honest debate about why this might be the case. The potential answer to that may well be that we're relaxing the standards on our standardized tests. If the international scores are showing a decline while our own tests are showing an increase, there's something that is seriously wrong with the "gains" that this government purports to be making in education, and this despite—we have to say it once again—that we spend \$8.5 billion more in education today than we did 10 years ago. Meanwhile, we have 250,000 fewer students. Where has the money gone? Have we seen any appreciation on test scores going forward?

I read with interest, I think members of this Legislature should know, that this government created the

Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario. The title: *Making the Grade? Troubling Trends in Postsecondary Student Literacy*.

I know all members of the Legislature will know that prior to entering this Legislature, I was a university professor. I have talked to the university professors that had been there before I got there and who had taught for a span of 15 or 20 years. They told me that the quality of the student now coming into university has deteriorated, has declined. Their reading and writing skills are certainly not what they were even a generation before. Well, Mr. Speaker, we now have a HEQCO report that actually talks about that. Let me take a little bit of time to outline what some of these reports have said.

0950

The executive summary suggests that “there is growing concern that Canadians’ literacy skills, including those of students attending post-secondary institutions in Ontario, are not meeting expectations.”

They go on to talk about the timing of this. The “troubling trends in literacy achievement and a lack of consistency in expectations for high school students who go on to post-secondary education” are very real.

“According to IALS, not even a quarter of respondents aged 18 to 65 scored above level 3—the minimum level of proficiency.” I think level 3 is related to the PISA scores—oh, sorry, the IALS. I made a mistake there.

“The most recent literacy results from PIAAC also registered no improvement but rather a slight deterioration in Canadians’ scores at both ends of the literacy spectrum, with a greater number of Canadians scoring at level 1 and below and fewer Canadians scoring at levels 4 and 5.” This is certainly a trend that we’re seeing right across the country, Mr. Speaker.

But what interested me about this report was a section that we find on page 16: “Are High School Graduates Prepared for PSE?”—for post-secondary education.

I’ll quote from the report: “The literature abounds with examples of college and university faculty bemoaning the perceived underpreparation of their first-year students.... In one survey of professors at Western University”—this is at Western University, right here in London, Ontario—“91% agreed that high schools do not sufficiently prepare students to write essays at a university level.” And we’re talking about gains in our system.

It goes on to suggest that “prose remains inelegant and unsophisticated, document structure is rudimentary and is often limited to the ‘five-paragraph essay’ taught in Ontario’s high schools, and critical thought often seems to be nonexistent.” These are what our professors are saying, once our students exit our elementary and secondary schools and go on to college and university.

“When a focus group of students at an Ontario university was asked how prepared they felt for university upon entry, most students stated that they were not at all prepared.” Again, we spend \$8.5 billion on education today, and there is a discrepancy between what these gains mean for the preparation of our students to succeed in our colleges and universities.

“A recent HEQCO-funded project at George Brown College recognizes outright”—this is a quote from this HEQCO-funded project—“that the ‘Ontario secondary school diploma or equivalent does not guarantee that all students are prepared for the rigors of post-secondary academic work.’” Again, we spend \$8.5 billion in the province of Ontario and we’re seeing a decline.

It concludes, on page 24: “The gap in expectations between high school graduation and post-secondary admission needs to be reconciled.”

Mr. Speaker, this seems to point to a troubling trend and an issue I have with our education system that I’ve expressed, and these international test scores actually show a lack of improvement. In fact, we’re doing worse today than we were 10 years ago. But we’re setting these standards lower for students, actually. Our EQAO scores might have gone up on a couple of indicators, but our international test scores don’t reflect that. And when these students leave our elementary and secondary schools, they’re not prepared to succeed in college or university. And at the end of the day, they’re calling these gains. Despite spending \$8.5 billion more on education today, they are met with modest success. You can read the report yourselves, if you would like.

I also read with interest—I love how in education you get lots of reports. I know the government is very happy with this report, which is the Final Report: Evaluation of the Implementation of the Ontario Full-Day Early Learning-Kindergarten Program. Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to state very succinctly that, as a member of this Legislature, I actually believe in early literacy. I think we should be making investments in improving early literacy and making sure our students are well prepared for the challenges of the 21st century.

But if we actually go into this report and the details of the report, we’re finding some troubling things, that despite the fact the government likes to say that everything is hunky-dory in education, it may not actually be the case.

There’s a number of aspects that have been studied here, but the fact that our special-needs students—the kinds of students that we’re hoping to improve with the introduction of full-day kindergarten—actually perform better in non-FDK schools is, for me, a very troubling trend. These are the very people we’re trying to help, and the report actually looks at the fact that for example, on social competence, students performed better overall in non-FDK schools, but that trend was even more pronounced for students with special educational needs. That’s a troubling trend.

In emotional maturity, again, the overall trend is that students actually performed a little better in emotional maturity in non-FDK schools, but that trend was even more pronounced for students with special educational needs.

The report talks about a number of results indicating that kindergarten students from FDK—sorry, that’s not the one I want.

On page 85 of the report, it states: “A final observation of the findings worth noting is that on several meas-

ures, the non-FDELK programs were associated with more positive outcomes. This was especially true for non-FDELK programs in low needs schools, on the EDI measures of emotional maturity and communications skills and general knowledge. To be clear, some children appear to have done worse with the FDELK than with non-FDELK.”

What we’ve suggested all along is that we actually have to understand the results and to modify the program to address these kinds of concerns. We’re spending \$1.5 billion on full-day kindergarten in the province of Ontario, and we’re just starting to see the results. There have been some positive results—I will acknowledge that—but there are some troubling trends as well.

“The children with special educational needs showed superior outcomes on the measures of social competence and emotional maturity in non-FDELK programs.” The basis of this difference is unclear, of course, but nonetheless, this is what the study found, and if we are going to be honest about the program, we should be addressing these concerns.

So at the end of the day, we have a lot to talk about with respect to gains, but one thing that I want to focus on in my remaining time is what I think is the priority of the Ontario PC caucus, and it involves regulation 274. We have stated—and we had a private member’s bill in the name of my friend from Nepean—Carleton, who wanted to modify regulation 274. We think it’s a priority of our party and should be the priority of the government.

We are increasingly troubled by what we’re hearing from the Minister of Education with respect to modifying regulation 274. We don’t think this should be something subject to collective bargaining. We think that legislators in this assembly have a role and a responsibility to ensure that we are putting the best teachers in front of our students. That best teacher might be the most experienced teacher, and quite often it is the most experienced teacher, but we shouldn’t limit the opportunity for our younger teachers to have a crack, particularly if they are showing superior skills in leading in the classroom. We should enable our principals to make those decisions on who is best able to fulfill a vacancy in that school based on their ability to teach effectively in the core subject matter, based on whatever holes that school needs to fill, if it’s with extracurricular activities or the like. We shouldn’t be limiting our teachers and our principals in finding the best teacher in front of the classroom.

1000

I know the minister has also talked about the fact that we’re trying to root out nepotism and that there are actually some things in regulation 274 that are actually good, and I agree. Posting positions: great. Eliminating nepotism, which our bill actually suggests, can be fulfilled by modifying hiring practices.

What we suggest—and I know the minister wants to talk about fast and speedy passage of this legislation. I would suggest in this Legislature, right here, right now, that if the minister is sincere about that, if they are sincere about putting this legislation forward and getting

this into committee so that the federations can come in and the school boards can come in, so that everybody who has a perspective, a point of view, can come in, and they want to do that as expeditiously as possible and before the next round of collective bargaining begins, which will happen early next year—then what I am asking the Minister of Education to do right here and commit to is to modify regulation 274 so that we can have merit-based hiring back in our schools, so we can ensure that the best teachers are in front of the classroom, so that we can ensure that principals in our school system are the ones who are going to determine the best person to fill that job—not based on seniority, not based on anything but the quality and the qualifications of that teacher. If the government is willing to meet us on that request, then we will meet them in their request to move this bill to committee as fast as possible. But if they are unwilling to talk about modifying regulation 274, then we’re going to have a serious discussion about the merits of this piece of legislation.

So I would suggest, in my final comments on this piece of legislation, let’s talk about putting regulation 274 back on the table. Let’s make sure that legislators in this assembly have a say on what happens and ensure that our students have the best teacher in front of the classroom. Then we can make peace with this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: While I applaud the intentions of the member from Cambridge—I think it’s clear that he’s concerned about the education system and the services that we provide for our students, and so I applaud the member for his intentions. I have some concern with the logic that he employs, and I simply suggest this as constructive criticism so that he can perhaps bolster his argument. The comparisons that he brought up, while I found them very interesting and certainly illuminative on the issue of how we fare internationally—the comparisons that the member from Cambridge drew were with science and math. Certainly there are a number of jurisdictions that performed better, but comparing the EQAO test on reading and writing and suggesting that those are indicative of a decline or incline when comparing with science and math isn’t the best argument. But I certainly take his point that we need to do better if we are falling behind other jurisdictions internationally. I think it’s a great point, and I support that concern.

What I want to talk about in my remaining minute is the three areas of grave concern I find in our education system. One is that while we have a significantly increasing population of new Canadians coming from various parts of the world, we are failing those new Canadians when it comes to ESL. Many school boards have talked about the fact that there is funding set aside for ESL but there’s a clear reduction in terms of ESL classes and ESL education and ESL students. That’s an area that we need to address. Why is there a reduction when we know that, in terms of population and demographics, there is certainly no reduction? We see, instead, an increase.

Another two areas—I think we need to have a fulsome education system which supports music. Music and arts are a fundamental aspect of developing yourself as a well-rounded human being.

And finally, physical education: We can only look at our youth to see that physical education is something that we need to make a priority, to prevent some of the ailments and illnesses that happen, moving forward. We need to focus on physical education as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Let me speak very briefly about the quality of education in Ontario. I think two things stand out very strongly. If you want to look at the pan-Canadian results, which are tests of all students in all jurisdictions in Canada, Ontario is the only province in which the students perform better than the Canadian average in math and science and literacy. So that's a Canadian, not an Ontario test, an across-Canada test.

If you look at the graduation rate on a very strict measure of following individual kids for five years, in 2003 the Ontario high school graduation rate was 68%. It is now 83%, and that's following individual children to see what individual kids have graduated. So we have made great strides in Ontario education.

Now, what the bill is actually about, of course, is school board collective bargaining. I know this is a highly technical bill, which may be why the member chose not to talk about it very much. But I do want to assure him that the Ministry of Labour experts have supported us greatly in terms of it, because it is a technical bill, and we've worked very closely with the labour relations experts from the Ministry of Labour to work out the details with both the school boards and the unions.

But what I really did find strange were the closing comments, in which I think what I heard was that for a bill on labour relations to figure out how to do collective bargaining, the support of that party is conditional on having the Legislature override something that was a result of collective bargaining. I find that very peculiar logic.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: First off, I want to congratulate my colleague the fine member from Cambridge, Mr. Leone, on his new appointment as the critic for education. I know, as an educator myself, and Mr. Leone being a doctor, he obviously is more than qualified to address the issues or concerns around our education system.

I just want to make a few observations, if I may, on what the Minister of Education acknowledged. I think, though, that some of her facts are mis-skewed, if you will. What we see first-hand is—I was in the classroom when our graduation rates were such, and what this government has done is lowered the bar so low that my dog could graduate from high school as an honour student.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I think the comparative analysis was a little rough. I would suggest you withdraw that last one.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: His name is Shakespeare—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I said withdraw.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Withdraw. His name is Shakespeare, Mr. Speaker, by the way.

I saw and witnessed first-hand the standardized test, the EQAO testing, under Mr. Harris, the quality of testing that was brought forward and what was instructed. I also witnessed first-hand, as my wife has, who is an elementary teacher, the standardized testing under this government, and I can honestly tell you, Mr. Speaker, the differences are leaps and bounds.

I think Mr. Leone made it very clear that there is obviously a problem in the education system. That's why Mr. Leone has left his profession as a professor and that's why I have left my profession as a teacher: to improve those scores.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the member for Cambridge for his comments. There was a lot of content in that speech, and several things I'd like to focus on.

The first is that I'm glad that the member for Cambridge recognized the loss to school boards of their right to participate in collective bargaining, which affected school boards as much as teachers. I hope that that indicates that they recognize the error of their ways in supporting Bill 115, which really triggered that loss of collective bargaining.

The second thing I wanted to say: As a researcher myself, someone who has written reports for the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, I know how statistics can be taken out of context and used in ways to support whatever side of an argument you want to stand on. There has been research that has critiqued an over-reliance on PISA and TIMSS scores, and EQAO testing scores, as these tests measure the extent to which the education system is delivering prescribed content.

There are other international measures. There is something called the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, or GEM, which is also conducted in over 50 countries internationally, and that global measure looks at the extent of the level of entrepreneurial activity, the level of start-ups, innovation within a country, and has found there is absolutely no correlation between PISA scores and the level of entrepreneurial activity. I think that's something that all sides of this House can agree on, that we need to support a knowledge economy, we need to support students to become innovators and to participate in future economic development.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Cambridge has two minutes.

Mr. Rob Leone: I appreciate the comments and questions—I don't know if I have any questions, but at least the comments—from the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton, the Minister of Education, my good friend the member from Northumberland-Quinte West and the new member from London West. I really appreciate the comments that were made.

I do want to address a couple of things. I know the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton suggested that I used comparisons of decline in math and science and TIMSS scores, but I also did mention that on the PISA scores, from 2000 to 2009 there actually has been a slight decline in the year-over-year comparisons. That was the reference I was making to that. I wanted to make sure he understood the context by which I was making those comments.

To the Minister of Education: I notice she mentioned that Ontario is performing well. I have to admit I was—I don't have the latest statistics on this to know whether this is true or not. Still, it's interesting. The PISA results from 2009 at least suggest that Alberta outperformed Ontario in reading, that Alberta and Quebec outperformed Ontario in math, and that—let's see here—British Columbia and Alberta, in the 2009 PISA test results, outperformed Ontario as well.

We can obviously quibble about the statistics, but what I was trying to present today is the fact that we're spending an increasing amount of money, and are the results going up in correspondence with those increased investments? I think the jury is still out on that, Mr. Speaker, which is why I wanted to present that to the members of this Legislature, to the people of Ontario, who I'm sure are watching this debate today. My concern is about improving test scores, improving the quality of our schools, improving the effect that teachers can have on our students. That's what our priorities are on this side of the Legislature.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: This morning, it gives me great honour to welcome my aunt Diane Brewer to the Legislature today. Diane has been the reeve of our municipality for almost 30 years. Also a family friend of ours Claudia Cloke is here today too. So welcome.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to welcome all the grade 9 students and young people from Don Valley West, who are here for Take Our Kids to Work Day: from Windfields Junior High School, Bella Rodriguez, Mateo Lopez and Alina Jing; and from St. Andrew's Junior High School, Asil Uzuak, Bill Chen and Keith Marin. Welcome, everyone.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to welcome Jakob Sundman to the House today. Jakob is a visiting co-op student from Åre, Sweden. He's going to Centennial Secondary School in Belleville.

Joining Jakob is Ian Acton, who is my old producer on the OHL Tonight on TVCogeco with the Belleville Bulls. It's good to see Ian.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome Michelle Billek from Mississauga–Erindale to Queen's Park today.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a great pleasure for me to introduce two people in the members' east gallery today as part of Take Our Kids to Work Day: Guy Skipworth and his son, Ian Skipworth. Guy Skipworth and I, in a previous career here at Queen's Park, worked for the late John Eakins, who represented the riding of Victoria–Haliburton from 1975 to 1990. Mr. Eakins of course was a Royal Canadian Air Force veteran in the Second World War.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Barrie. Let's be brief, please.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to introduce Andrea Chiappetta, who was a former page here during the one-day prorogation page term. He has come back today to shadow me around and get a better taste of how the Legislature works. So I'd like him to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's my pleasure today to introduce my guests, Jay Peterson and his daughter Riley Peterson. Today is bring your daughter to work day, so Jay has brought Riley in. She attends grade 9 at Vaughan Road Academy in Toronto. She's a dedicated hockey player, playing as goalie with the Aurora Panthers Bantam AA. I just want to say, welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Michael Chan: I'd like to welcome three constituents of mine from Markham–Unionville. They are Kosan, Hisan and Uswa Shafaque. They are the brother and sister of page Sarhan Shafaque.

Speaker, I would like to welcome five staff members from my ministry from the Ontario public service. They are joining us this morning in the public gallery with 23 grade 9 students as part of their Take Our Kids to Work Day. Welcome, everyone.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: As the Premier made reference to, it is Take Our Kids to Work Day today. It is my pleasure to introduce my son—he tells me that he is my greatest achievement—Dawson.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Who are we to argue?

Introductions?

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to introduce Debbie Havill, a sonographer by profession, and Leonard Domino from the Ontario Association of Medical Radiation Sciences. The association is visiting the House today, so please join me in welcoming them to the Ontario Legislature.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased today to welcome Gary Burch and Aggie Tose from the Haliburton County Home Builders Association. I want to mention that Aggie received from the Ontario Home Builders Association the David Horton Leadership Award for her outstanding achievements. So welcome in the public gallery.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je voudrais présenter Paul Grenier, ici de Welland, qui est avec sa fille Claire; Sébastien Goyer, who is the current chief administrative

officer and clerk for the municipality of French River; and Brennan Kenny. They are here in the gallery with us today.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to welcome my assistant at Queen's Park, Krystina DeRose, here today, along with my granddaughter, Rachel Rynard, who was a former page. She's here for Take Our Kids to Work Day and I'm teaching her all about the Ontario College of Trades.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to welcome my nephew Harry O'Malley who is here as part of Take Our Kids to Work Day.

Mr. Mike Colle: I would like to welcome, as part of take your kid to Queen's Park day, Brigid Waddingham who's here. She's a grade 9 student at the amazing St. Clement's School in my riding. Welcome, Brigid Waddingham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I welcome home builders here today. As well, from my riding the Durham home builders are here.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I would like to welcome Len Domino and Debbie Havill from the Ontario Association of Medical Radiation Sciences. They're here today to meet with MPPs and I want to welcome them to the Legislature.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I would like to welcome Kadie Ward from London to question period today. This is Katie's first question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? Last call for introductions.

Just before we start, I would like to also remind members that I've made the commitment to try to get everyone's introductions in. Please resist the temptation to enter into a short minister's statement or a member's statement. It would be helpful to all of us so that we can get our introductions in, and I would appreciate it very much.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Tim Hudak: I have one very straightforward question to the Premier. Premier, when the NDP support our want of confidence motion in the House later this afternoon, will you obey the will of the House or will you put the Liberal Party first once again?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we are focusing on creating jobs, on making the investments that we know are needed for people to thrive, for communities to thrive, for infrastructure to be built and for businesses to be able to grow and expand in the province. That is our focus. I look forward to the response from the opposition parties on the fall economic statement tomorrow. I look forward to explaining to people across the province our plan for those investments in people and in

infrastructure and in a business climate that is going to be able to bring investment to the province, and what we're going to do to stimulate that kind of investment, because I believe that is the way forward. It's a sharp difference from what the party opposite would like to do, which is cut and slash. I do not believe that is the way forward. I believe that investing in our future is the way that we need to go.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Sadly, it's just what I expected. It sounds just like Dalton McGuinty all over again. We have a party here that wasted \$1.1 billion to save two Liberal seats. You didn't care about somebody in Milton who could use some treatment to prolong her life and spend time with her family to fight cancer. That didn't matter to you. What mattered to you was saving two Liberal seats in the last election campaign. That's your priority.

This motion says that we simply do not trust the Liberals to run this province anymore, that the cries from seniors, men and women across the province that enough is enough have been heard by at least one party, the PC Party. If the NDP have the courage to do what's right and support our motion, will you listen to the voice of the majority of members in the Legislature or will you again put the Liberal Party first each and every time?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you, Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I am listening to people across this province who are telling me that they elected a minority Parliament and they expect us to do everything in our power to make that minority Parliament work.

Let me just say that there has been a lot of legislation that has moved through in the last few weeks: the Local Food Act, passed yesterday, the Wireless Services Agreements Act, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, consumer protections, the Financial Accountability Officer legislation, family caregiver leave legislation, protecting kids from skin cancer. The Legislature is working, and it's very gratifying that we've been able to find common ground and we've been able to bring those pieces of legislation to the House and move them through. That's because the opposition parties and our government have been able to find a way to work together. That's what people expect of us, Mr. Speaker. That's what we're going to continue to do.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The only reason things moved through the House, Premier, is because we agreed to clear the decks to see your jobs plan. We're the ones who said, "Pass that stuff through." We cleared the decks to see what you've got. But 10 months later, Premier, all we see is a vacuous Liberal agenda putting more fluff into the system. You've got all kinds of balloon animals and

card tricks to try to distract attention; you don't have a plan for jobs.

We have a plan for jobs. We have a plan to put our economy back on track with more jobs and better take-home pay. My view: Let's get on with the job. And if the NDP finally discovers their moral compass and says that they are on the side of taxpayers like we are, why don't you actually listen to the will of the House when that happens later on this afternoon?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just don't believe that those 2,000-plus young people who have been able to find positions because of our youth employment strategy think that's not important.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Member from Leeds—Grenville, second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I don't think the people who have jobs at the Ford plant think that the \$70 million that we are investing to make sure that Ford can compete in the global economy don't believe that's important. I think the people who live in northern and rural communities think that the \$100-million infrastructure fund that we've put in place is exactly what's needed in order to be able to invest in their future. I think the people who are—and I will say this, Mr. Speaker—part of the horse racing industry, who see that they have a sustainable future, think that that is a very good thing. So we are doing the work that is necessary—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I need to hear.

Wrap up, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the people who met with us yesterday from the chicken farmers are very pleased that our government has taken a strong position on supply management. We've made that position nationally and we will continue to advocate for that.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Tim Hudak: Look, I don't even know how to answer that. I talked to the folks in the horse racing industry as soon as Monday. Premier, if they heard that answer, they would say "Horse feathers," but not exactly—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Stop the clock. I have two things in my head at the same time. I didn't hear who it was directed to, and the Minister of the Environment will come to order.

Direction, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: To the Premier, Speaker. I think the Premier has lost touch. I think she has surrounded herself with Liberal insiders who are benefitting from the inside deals. I think the reason why she's not answering my

question on the want of confidence motion—the motion basically says Ontarians have lost trust in the Liberal government to run this province anymore, that enough is enough. I think the reason why she's dodging those questions is because the fix is in, that no matter what happens, no matter what they do, the NDP will give them a get-out-of-jail-free card every time because you're basically one and the same. We'll see what the vote is later today; we'll see if the NDP has any kind of moral compass. But the bottom line for me is we need change for a better, stronger—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to be clear with the Leader of the Opposition: I do not take for granted the position that we are in. I believe very strongly that we have to earn the respect of the people of this province every single day. That is why we are working so hard to do what we believe is right based on the evidence that we see around us. We have constrained spending over the last number of years. We have overachieved on our deficit reduction targets. We believe that now it is very important that we make the investments that are going to allow this economy to thrive, that we make the investments in infrastructure, in the future of people, making sure that people have a decent retirement, that they have a strong education system, a strong health care system, and making sure that we put in place the business conditions that will allow businesses to thrive. I call on the Leader of the Opposition to support us in getting the small business act—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Now we understand the problem. The Premier says the only problem is that the Liberals are a bunch of overachievers. Well, let's look at what you have overachieved. We've lost 300,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs while you added 300,000 to the government payroll. Hydro rates have doubled and they're going through the roof. The debt has doubled in our province—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Rural Affairs, come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The mighty province of Ontario that had always been the engine that drove this great country is now first in debt and last in jobs. I want to see Ontario have a turn-around plan to make us first in jobs and last in debt, a place where people come from all over the world to settle here.

I think the problem is that you're out of ideas. You've got 36 panels going. You're the same as Dalton McGuinty. You've got them in your back pocket and this province continues to spiral. I think it's time for change. I think people across our province are saying enough is enough. Let's get rid of the Liberals. Let's build a stronger Ontario for our children and grandchildren.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.
Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that, as a province, we have created and attracted more jobs than other jurisdictions. The fact is that we went through a huge economic downturn and we have in the order of 400,000 net new jobs, so we have come a very long way.

I am not suggesting that there isn't more to do. In fact, I'm suggesting the opposite. I'm suggesting that we have to take this moment in our history very seriously and we have to, as a province, make a decision. We have to decide collectively whether we are going to go down a path of cutting and slashing and diminishing the economy in this province, Mr. Speaker, which is what the PCs are advocating. They are advocating that we cut services, that we cut the public service, that we diminish the services that are available to people in health care and in education. I don't believe that's the way we should go. I believe that we should make the investments that are necessary to allow the economy to expand to support businesses and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The bottom line is, the people of Ontario don't trust the Liberals anymore. You've bankrupted the province, you've chased jobs out of Ontario and you've put us deep, deep in provincial debt.

You know what, Premier? As I travel around the province, and I'm sure you do too, I hear two things about your gas plant scandal. I hear (1) somebody should go to jail over this, and (2) I hear the Liberals should pay that money back, not the taxpayers of the province of Ontario.

The problem is, I don't know where the NDP draws the line. I don't know why they give you a pass each and every time. I hope they will screw up the courage to actually be on the side of taxpayers like we are and say the time for the Liberal, corrupt government—it's time to go. Let's bring real change to our province of Ontario and follow the vote later on today.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I don't think there was a question in there, but the reality is that we are intent on making the investments and putting the supports in place so that people have what they need, the services that they need, so that businesses have a climate that they can thrive in. Part of that is the small businesses act, Mr. Speaker. We really very much believe that it would be important to get that act passed so we can support those small businesses and give them a break on their payroll taxes. That bill is being blocked in committee, and it would be of great assistance to the small businesses in this province if the opposition would work with us and get that through.

I also believe that making the investments in infrastructure that are necessary in our rural and northern—
Interjections.

Hon. Mario Sergio: The Walkerton days are over.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Minister responsible for seniors, I don't need that. Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know we face challenges, and that's why it's extremely important that we make the right decisions at this point that will set us up for the future that Ontario can achieve. That's why those investments are so important, Mr. Speaker. That's why we're going to continue to look for ways to support the economy and make sure that it can thrive.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The Liberal government has for years insisted that policies of tax giveaways and harmonization would actually improve productivity and spur investment in our province. Can the Premier explain why, then, Ontario ranks ninth out of 10 provinces when it comes to productivity growth?

1050

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party raises a very good question about the particular configuration of tax credits and so on that are in place. One of the things the finance minister will talk about tomorrow is that it's important that we actually do make sure that those are working, that they are having the intended impact. It's one of the things Don Drummond has spoken to us about and it's something that I think is very important that we look at. I'm glad the leader of the third party has raised it, but we're already on it, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Since the Liberals were first elected, Ontario has lost 300,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs, and despite promise after promise, those good jobs have not come back.

Today, 110 women and men who work at the Kellogg plant in London have learned that they'll be losing their jobs come January.

Is the Premier admitting that the government's policy of no-strings-attached giveaways hasn't been working?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No, Mr. Speaker. What I'm saying is that there are a number of things at work here. One of them is that we need to look at the tax credit system and make sure the tax credits that are in place have the desired impact. We are doing that and the minister will talk about that tomorrow.

The other reality is that the manufacturing sector has changed. When I visit manufacturing plants across the province, as I have, whether it's in food processing or whether it's in another sector, what I see is that advanced manufacturing (a) needs a different set of skills, and (b) needs a different size of workforce.

We're in a transition. It is a difficult transition, and that's why it's very important that in our diverse econ-

omy we play to our strengths and we make sure that we put in place the supports where we can thrive. That's the work that we're doing, Speaker, and I would welcome her support in that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Over the last 10 years of Liberal government, 300,000 good manufacturing jobs have disappeared. Our province has the highest electricity rates in the country, the lowest productivity growth and an unemployment rate that is above the national average. The Premier still insists the plan is working, while at the same time her actions seem to suggest something different. When are people like the women and men losing jobs in London going to see some real action from the Liberal government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There are jobs across the province that have come back. There are factories that are expanding, businesses that are expanding. But as I said before, it's very important that we play to our strengths and we find those sectors that have the capacity to expand.

I will just say, wearing my hat as Minister of Agriculture and Food, that that is one of the sectors where there is huge potential to expand, and that's why I've put a challenge in place to the food processing and the food producing industry to do what they can to expand, with our support. We are looking at the regulatory scheme. We've got in place risk management programs. We're working with the sector through the Local Food Fund—\$30 million over the next three years—to make sure we make those investments that are going to allow that agriculture sector to expand.

That's what I mean by playing to our strengths, and that is how we are going to grow in Ontario.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. The Premier says she wants greater openness and transparency, but she doesn't seem willing to walk the walk. Why did Liberal members just this morning vote against asking the Auditor General to look into the \$180 million the government spent on their cancelled nuclear expansion plans?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question. I haven't seen the Hansard from this morning, so I don't know exactly what went on at the committee, but what I can say is that I have answered this question before about the \$180 million, that the \$180 million was spent in order to prepare for new nuclear build that we have determined, through the evidence, is not necessary. But that work that has been done is not for naught. It is absolutely work that can be used if and when we determine that we need to go ahead.

So I think that \$180 million is money that was well spent. The information is necessary, and that work will stand us in good stead if the decision should change in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontarians know that the Liberals can't be trusted to tell the whole story on money wasted in the energy sector. The Liberals claimed it would cost \$40 million to cancel the Oakville gas plant. The auditor showed it would cost 20 times as much. The Liberals claimed it would cost \$190 million to cancel the Mississauga gas plant. The auditor showed that was off by \$85 million.

I'm disappointed that Mr. Hudak's Conservatives chose to vote against transparency as well, but we know not to expect very much from them except for political games. But the Premier said she wants to be open, so why did Liberal members vote to stop the independent Auditor General of this province from determining the full costs of cancelling their nuclear expansion plans?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I think the honourable leader of the NDP, in her question, points out the obvious fact that the Liberals do not have a majority on any legislative committee. In fact, we were joined by the opposition in opposing the motion, and the reason why is that the motion itself was flawed. The suppositions behind it in terms of the costing that had been put forward in the motion were incorrect, and the committee—and I think we all agree that committees should be free to do their work—deemed, with the support of the official opposition, that it was not an appropriate motion.

If the honourable member wants to talk about transparency, I will talk about our Premier, who asked the Auditor General to look into the Oakville gas plant, who has appeared in front of the justice committee—in fact, I understand, will be appearing again in front of the justice committee to answer questions—and comes to this House virtually every day to answer questions on a project that the leader of the NDP wanted cancelled herself.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: For families and businesses paying the highest electricity bills in Canada, this is a pretty simple issue. They're tired of watching the Liberal government use the hydro system as a political football, and then sticking them with the bill.

We called for the auditor to look at how much money was spent planning for a project that was shelved, and how much more would be spent if this government or a future government then takes that plan off the shelf again. Why is the Premier scared—afraid, frightened, worried—about an independent review of the decision they made?

Hon. John Milloy: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: First of all, deferring new nuclear is the right decision. We're not going to invest \$15 billion in power that we don't need, because we have a surplus at this time. All of OPG's expenditures—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Stormont, come to order. The member from

Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, come to order. The member from Northumberland, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: All of OPG's expenditures have been reviewed by the Ontario Energy Board, an independent semi-judicial agency, and posted publicly on their website. The information they are asking the committee to work on has been published on the OPA website. Please refer to the OPA website, and you will get the answer that you need.

Secondly, they have no plan for energy. All they do is criticize. Their base out there in the community is calling us and thanking us for the decisions that we're doing, because they have no policy.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday in justice committee, JoAnne Butler once again joined us. She confirmed, yet again, that everyone in cabinet, including yourself, knew that the true cost of the cancelled Oakville power plant would have been more than \$40 million.

I'm troubled by the fact that you stand here, day in and day out, and deny that. You refuse to call a judicial inquiry, you refuse to appear before committee and you refuse to put forward a confidence motion on the floor of this House. The only thing we can do as the official opposition is table an opposition motion, which we are today, to talk about the trust of this government, which has been lost by the public. We'll be having a vote on whether or not the majority of the House, including the people of Ontario, have had their confidence in you drained. It's going to be up to you whether or not you're going to ignore or listen to the will of the people.

If it passes, will you do the honourable thing and resign?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the House leader is going to want to speak to the technicalities of the committee in the supplementary, but if the reason that the opposition is bringing forward the motion is that I won't appear at committee, then they can cancel their motion, because I've got a date. I'm going in on December 3. I've been there once, I've told the committee everything that I know, I've been asked to come back again; I am going back again on December 3. I will answer the questions again, but the fact is, I have given the committee all the information that I have.

1100

As I said, we have a date now for December 3. It was just a matter of arranging our schedules. I will be there on December 3 to answer those questions again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The last time the Premier appeared, I was actually there, and she really didn't answer any of our questions. In fact, she stuck to that \$40-million claim that she had, which JoAnne Butler debunked yesterday.

It's very clear that you would do anything to cling to power. You wasted \$1.1 billion, and you refuse to be

held accountable for that massive scandal. The moral bankruptcy of this Liberal Party is so patently obvious that you are only able to stay in government because the NDP are enabling you.

Unlike the NDP, we in the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party have been listening to constituents. My leader is right: People want someone to go to jail, and they want the Liberal Party to pay that money back.

While we are here today holding this Liberal government accountable, it is the NDP who are standing on their heads and spitting nickels and sending little trinkets and trash to the horse racing community. We want—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, let's review the facts. It was this Premier who asked the Auditor General to look at the Oakville plant, who asked the justice committee—expanded the scope—asked them to look into the situation, has appeared in front of committee and has taken responsibility for what happened and put a plan to correct it moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, it was that party that spent the last election going around saying that the only way—the only way—to have the gas plant cancelled was to vote for the Progressive Conservatives. It was that party that put out press releases and went on the Twittersverse and made YouTube videos. It is that party which refuses to talk about their plan and about their costing. It is that party which is not allowing five of their candidates to come forward to the committee and talk about costing.

If you want to talk about a lack of accountability, you have to look no further than the official opposition.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question this morning is for the Premier. Good morning, Premier.

Speaker, New Democrats have repeatedly asked this government to take action to protect cancer services in Windsor and Essex county. Despite grand assurances, cancer patients are set to lose all thoracic surgeries next spring. It seems to the people in Windsor and Essex county that this Liberal government is not listening to their concerns.

I ask the Premier: Is she prepared to stand by and do nothing as Windsor and Essex county lose essential health care services?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question. I know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care actually answered this question yesterday and acknowledged, as I want to, the advocacy that the member for Windsor West has done on this issue, both with the Minister of Health and with me, to make sure that the decisions that are being made are in the best interests of all of the constituents in the community.

The experts at Cancer Care Ontario are working to ensure that all patients, including those in Windsor, get the highest quality of care. What that means is that they are looking for ways and assurances that outcomes for cancer patients will continue to improve. That means that hospitals have to meet a minimum volume of surgeries in order for those outcomes to continue to improve and in order to be designated, in this case, as a thoracic centre. We know that the more surgeries that are performed, the better the outcomes are, and that's why the decisions that are being made have been made.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, the residents of Windsor and Essex county are mobilizing in order to protect health care services. They're asking the government to listen to the hospitals, listen to the physicians and listen to the patients, who know that moving thoracic surgery to London is the wrong thing to do.

Exceptions have been made before. Yet this time the government seems unwilling to consider that the number of surgeries isn't as important as the access to those life-saving cancer surgeries.

I ask this government yet again: Will they take action to protect health services in Windsor and Essex county or are they determined to sit back and do nothing as the public outcry grows and grows and grows?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are not going to sit back; we have not been sitting back. It is of primary concern to us that those services are the best services and that they are available to all of the constituents in your riding and the ridings in the community. It's very important to us that the people of Windsor have the very highest-quality services, so we continue to work with the community.

The Ministry of Health continues to work to make sure that the best and highest-quality services are available. That is exactly what the member for Windsor West has been advocating for. She has raised the issue with us. We will continue to work with her and with the member opposite to make sure that those services are available and of the highest quality.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is for the Minister of Labour. I know that our government is committed to investing in youth through our youth employment fund. A large part of investing in our youth is making sure that, while working, they are in a fair and safe workplace.

The constituents in my community of Scarborough-Guildwood are pleased that we're helping youth as this is a top priority for our community. However, they are concerned about the use of internships, where they are not paid, and are speaking out about this issue.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Are such internships legal in Ontario, and what is the ministry doing to make sure that when young people in my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood start a new job, they will be paid for the work that they do?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member for Scarborough-Guildwood for asking a very important question and her advocacy on behalf of our young people.

The youth employment fund is a great investment, and I'm pleased that over 2,400 youths across our province have already found jobs through this initiative. That very much speaks to building a stronger workforce and about building safe and fair workplaces.

Speaker, I want to be absolutely clear to all members in this Legislature. In Ontario, it does not matter what your job title or your position is; if you work for someone, you are covered by the Employment Standards Act. There is no such thing as an unpaid internship. There is a narrow exemption for co-op students in accredited university and college programs, trainees and the self-employed.

Any concerns regarding working arrangements can be referred to the Ministry of Labour's hotline at 1-800-531-5551. Help is available in 23 different languages.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you to the minister for his answer outlining the strong rules we have on internships in Ontario. I know the families and the young people in my community of Scarborough-Guildwood will also be pleased to know that their loved ones are protected and treated fairly. It is great to hear that over 2,400 young people have already found jobs through the youth employment fund and can begin building their careers.

But, Minister, I sometimes hear from constituents that even though they know the Ministry of Labour is there to help them, they are reluctant to reach out. Speaker, through you to the minister: Are formal complaints and reactive inspections the only way that the ministry will investigate?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again I want to repeat very clearly that under the law in Ontario, there is no such thing as an unpaid internship. If you work for someone, you are covered under the Employment Standards Act and you're entitled to at least minimum wage, vacation pay etc.

The ministry has been very active on this issue. I, as the Minister of Labour, have been very actively writing to student groups, to post-secondary institutions, to employers and to job sites to make sure that they know what the rule is and that there's no confusion around our rules. As I said, we will investigate any and all complaints to enforce our rules. In addition, our enforcement officers specifically ask about internships during our proactive inspections.

In fact, this past spring, in the budget—through that budget, we are investing an additional \$3 million for proactive employment standards enforcement so that interns' rights are protected. I encourage interns to go to ontario.ca/internshipstandards for clarification.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games. Minister, security and

transportation are linked, and your laissez-faire approach to security has me a little bit worried about transportation plans as well.

1110

The GTA already experiences some of the worst gridlock in North America, yet there's no plan and no extensive budget released yet. I am concerned because venues like the Pan Am park and the Pan Am villages are connected by one of Toronto's top 10 worst roads or, alternatively, a streetcar that's already the TTC's busiest route. According to leaks, your curious solution is to add thousands more vehicles on this route during the Pan Am Games.

Minister, when are you exactly going to release the transportation master plan for the Pan Am Games?

Hon. Michael Chan: I think that in the last couple of weeks, I had two scheduled debates with the member opposite. They did not happen. Well, he did not show up, and up to this time, I do not know what the reason was for that.

But having said that, as has been our practice, once host jurisdiction responsibilities and plans are confirmed, we state them openly—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It has been pointed out that the microphone isn't on or is not working. Can we try that, please? Is it on? It's on.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you, Speaker.

That speaks to our commitment to make these games the most open and transparent games.

Our government brought the organizing committee under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. We required senior executives to publicly disclose their salaries on a yearly basis, and we will continue to communicate our progress on the games to the public.

Speaker, in terms of security, once plans are finalized, we will publicly disclose the parts of the plan that will not compromise citizens' safety.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Speaker, you don't start making the plan midway through the process. We know that we're one and a half years out, as the minister keeps pointing out, but it's never too early to become the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games.

I've figured out you won't answer anything in question period, so I've attempted to extract answers through the order paper, and on April 29, I asked you for a transportation plan. You responded that you're working on and it will be completed in "late 2013." Minister, guess what? It's late 2013. There's no plan, there's no budget, and we don't have any word from you on what this is going to cost us.

To avoid transparency, you even desperately tried blocking a motion in committee by voting against an investigation into Pan Am. At any cost, you're avoiding answering these simple questions. Why is that, Minister? Give us the exact date the public can see your transportation master plan and budget.

Hon. Michael Chan: This is not December 2013 yet, so it is not really that late.

Speaker, our transportation master plan will guide our operations as we prepare for the games. We're also working together on an integrated stakeholder outreach and engagement plan which will be used to guide transportation-related communications to all stakeholders.

We cannot speculate what the costs of transportation will be at this moment; the costs will be revealed when the plan is finalized. In other games, transportation plans have come out 12 to 18 months before they are under way, and we are on pace to meet that timeline.

SECURITY AT CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. This past weekend, Adam Kargus was brutally beaten and murdered at the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre. On Monday, the minister shared with this House the number of inmates at EMDC on the night of the murder but failed to tell us the number of correctional officers. We now learn that there were only two officers overseeing three units with a total of 150 inmates, when there should have been two officers in each unit that night. Does the minister believe that this is the right level of staffing to ensure inmate and officer safety?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: The member is speculating on how many staff was there. I know that the EMDC capacity was under capacity that day. I also know that we have done a lot to improve the safety of both our inmates and our correctional officers in EMDC. I am going to continue to work with both the union and the management to make sure that the situation does improve at EMDC.

As I said, we have installed 350 security cameras, a new control module and six metal detectors, and we have increased correctional officers by 11 in the facility.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Again to the minister: The minister is repeating what she told us on Monday, that these new security cameras and these new enhancements are the solution to violence at EMDC. It's true that the cameras helped the police identify and lay charges against the suspects after the fact, but they did not prevent Adam Kargus from losing his life.

When is the ministry going to fix the design flaws at EMDC, implement direct supervision and prevent tragedies like this from ever happening again?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Yes, this is a tragedy; what happened at EMDC is a tragic situation. I know the police are doing the investigation as we speak, so we're not going to speculate. The coroner's office also will do its own investigation, and, internally, we are doing our investigation. That's the situation, Mr. Speaker.

In our correctional facilities, on a daily basis, the correctional staff deal with and manage risk of inmate violence, and we have policies and procedures to do so.

But, Mr. Speaker, what I'm glad about is that from last year to this year—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Last year there were 244 inmate-on-inmate assaults, and this year we reduced it to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, I understand that you announced the government's intention to review the Development Charges Act on Friday. On October 18, I, along with all my Ottawa colleagues, joined Mayor Jim Watson to witness the official start of tunnelling for Ottawa's new LRT. This line will transform downtown Ottawa, but also neighbourhoods like "the avenues" in Eastway Gardens and Cyrville, both in my riding of Ottawa South. These investments could cause significant development, radically altering neighbourhoods in communities that my constituents call home. This increased density means additional strains on existing critical infrastructure such as bus routes like the 114, schools like Riverview Alternative and hospitals like the Ottawa Hospital and CHEO.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, could the minister explain to my constituents and me how this review of development could help my community better prepare for it?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member for the question. Communities across Ontario are experiencing some of the kinds of changes that are happening in Ottawa, and our government continues to work with municipalities to make sure that that development doesn't mean existing taxpayers are on the hook for costs required for that new development.

We've heard that municipal leaders feel the current system limits their ability to recover all capital costs for some of the services and their ability to pay for those vital infrastructure projects. We've also heard from the development community that they want more accountability and transparency. At the end of the day, everybody wants more clarity when it comes to the costs the government imposes.

Our government believes it's time for a refresh. It's time to make sure the development charges system still answers our communities' needs. I want to urge you and your constituents to participate in the review. We expect the review to include communities and municipal governments, because we want to hear their solid ideas for improvement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: It's good to hear about our government's continued respect for communities and municipalities, unlike the opposition party, who did not consult with municipalities when they forced amalgamations on communities across the province.

Development, whether it happens in Ottawa or Oliver Paipooonge, Niagara Falls or Northeastern Manitoulin, can be contentious. My constituents have numerous questions about land use planning, the appeals system and the Ontario Municipal Board. Some find the current process complicated, difficult to navigate and even harder to understand.

Minister, our government needs to ensure that our planning system works well for municipalities and community groups as well as developers while remaining responsive to the changing needs of our communities. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can you explain to my constituents about how they can get involved in this important review?

1120

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: As a former municipal city councillor, I know how challenging development can be for communities, no matter where they are in the province. However, our land use planning system gives municipalities the tools that they can use to manage growth so we can all build the kinds of cities and towns that we want to live, work and play in.

I, too, have heard from municipal leaders, from planners, from developers and from the public that the rules are too complex. They're concerned about the delays, and appeals are also frustrating. That's why our government will be holding regional workshops in Kitchener–Waterloo, Ottawa, Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay, Peel region and Toronto to hear from everyday Ontarians on how we can make the system more responsive to Ontario's changing needs, because well-planned cities that balance Ontario's needs to develop with the protection of our natural heritage mean that our cities are more able to ensure long-term prosperity, environmental health and the social well-being of all the residents of Ontario.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Premier. Premier, the people of Ontario love and rely on our health care system. Some say it's one of the defining characteristics of what it means to be Canadian, as it represents a number of our core values as a nation. We define ourselves in terms of our shared responsibilities toward one another and our diverse and inclusive society. We especially help the most vulnerable in our society. It's the Canadian thing to do.

Within that context, the Minister of Health bears a sacred trust and is the person of last resort to whom Ontarians turn in their hour of need. So, Premier, your government continues to refuse to help Kimm Fletcher and others like her.

Premier, my health care system includes Kimm Fletcher. Why doesn't yours?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Health has addressed this issue a number of times, and I just want to say that it is, as she has said, a very sad and tragic situation that a young woman with children would

be in this situation and would have such a frightening prognosis.

There is nothing more important than being able to save people's lives and to have the health care system work. But part of that is taking the politics out of these kinds of decisions. That is exactly what we have had to do. We have all the drugs go through an expert committee that undertakes a thorough evaluation based on the best available evidence. That is the process that is in place, and we have to respect that process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Premier, your health care system has devolved into one that creates winners and losers. It is one where you are content to stand back at arm's length awaiting a decision to reach the health minister from a faceless committee that may or may not meet in a timely fashion.

However, time is not a resource that vulnerable individuals like Kimm Fletcher have in abundance. Not knowing whether your health minister's committee will find in her favour, anxiety and worry eat up the time she has left to herself, her family and her friends.

Kimm Fletcher's case also speaks to one of the core values of the role of the Minister of Health. If she can't help vulnerable people like Kimm Fletcher, then what is the purpose of the Minister of Health?

Premier, my health care system includes Kimm Fletcher. If yours doesn't, your Minister of Health is failing the people of Ontario and should be replaced. Premier, will you replace your Minister of Health?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Our Minister of Health is committed, as I believe previous Ministers of Health from other parties have been, to evidence-based practice, because that is the only way to have an objective system that weighs all of the alternatives. The Committee to Evaluate Drugs has twice reviewed Avastin, but even though that is the case, the Minister of Health has asked the committee to ensure that they've reviewed the most recent evidence on Avastin. She has taken that action to make sure that that review happens, but it is imperative that we have some objective measures by which to make these decisions. Difficult and tragic as they are, it is absolutely imperative that we have a system in place in order to make decisions. That is what we will adhere to.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, 20 months ago, the Liberal government announced the divestment of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission without any consultation with northerners and, as it turns out, any thought about the real costs. Northerners united and forced the government to backtrack. In response, the minister created the minister's advisory committee and has since repeatedly stated that divestment is not the only option for the ONTC.

The committee has released its recommendations. My question is simple: Will the minister act on those recommendations?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much for the question. I very much appreciated it. Indeed, we are very committed to seeing that the ONTC remains an efficient and sustainable transportation and telecommunications organization. We are very committed to working with the minister's advisory committee, which we brought together in the early spring. We've had a number of meetings and had some very, very important—and, may I say, some very candid—discussions about the best course forward.

You're right: At the FONOM gathering this past May, I was able to speak there. I wanted to say publicly at that time that we did not see divestment as necessarily being the only option. We've continued those discussions.

You mentioned recommendations coming forward. The fact is that we are still very much continuing our work with the ministerial advisory committee. I'm looking forward to getting together with them again relatively soon, hopefully sometime later this month—we haven't got a date picked quite yet. But again, our commitment is to maintain a system that will work and be efficient and effective for northerners, something we understand how important it is in northeastern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines: The minister's advisory committee has released its recommendations and they show a clear plan forward. The committee and northerners are concerned because the status quo is preventing the company from bidding on contracts, and it's leaving 900 families in turmoil.

Time is of the essence. My question is simple: Is the government going to listen to northerners and act on the recommendations of the minister's advisory committee?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Again, certainly I will very much acknowledge that the minister's advisory committee has recognized that the status quo is not an option. As I say, we've had significant discussions looking into all lines of the ONTC, and we recognize that the status quo is not an option.

We are determined to find a sustainable solution for all the lines of the ONTC. Indeed, there are opportunities, we believe, potentially in terms of the refurbishment division. Certainly we recognize how important the freight division is, and we're very convinced that, indeed, there are ways that we can actually improve the operations of the ONTC.

We are continuing to work with the members of the minister's advisory committee. They have been very dedicated, and they've worked very, very hard and listened very much to all the information that we've been able to bring together.

That work continues. Our commitment continues—something the Premier feels very strongly about as well. We recognize that the status quo is not an option, we recognize that the right decisions need to be made, and

we're committed to seeing that the right decisions are indeed made.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. I'd like to ask the minister about one of the recommendations that came out of the Ipperwash Inquiry report.

Speaker, you will know that in 2008, the New Relationship Fund was established, with the intention to facilitate consultations between the government, the private sector, First Nations and Métis communities. Constituents in my riding routinely ask about what action the government is taking to ensure that all First Nations and Métis persons have the same access to opportunities that all Ontarians have.

The New Relationship Fund is obviously a great initiative. It's a very worthwhile cause, but would the minister please tell us about how much progress has been made on this program to date?

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for that question. The New Relationship Fund provides communities with tools that will support sustainable economic growth, growth that needs to be in place if there's going to be any kind of effective long-term and meaningful change with our aboriginal communities. The New Relationship Fund supports aboriginal communities and organizations to engage in consultation with government and the private sector.

There are three types of funding. Core consultation funding is available to First Nations and Métis communities so that they can better engage with government and the private sector on lands and resources issues. A second type of funding, enhanced capacity-building funding, is available to First Nations, Métis communities and aboriginal communities. This helps to build additional capacity over and above the core capacity funding.

1130

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the future prosperity of Ontario is dependent on the full participation of all Ontarians—First Nations, Inuit and Métis—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The fund sounds quite progressive. It appears to be a very solid step in ensuring that First Nations and Métis persons in Ontario have access to good opportunities.

What my constituents want to know, though, Speaker, is how the fund is actually working. What they really want to know is how the New Relationship Fund is delivering results, and they want to know that the funding is money well spent.

Can the minister tell the House of some very specific examples of the New Relationship Fund and how it's working to link aboriginal communities in a meaningful engagement with the government and the private sector?

Hon. David Zimmer: Quite specifically, between 2008 and 2013, the New Relationship Fund has invested

\$77.4 million to support over 520 projects in 137 First Nations, 33 Métis communities and 23 aboriginal organizations. That's a total of 193 recipients. We've created more than 540 jobs.

A further \$14.5 million in funding has been allocated for the 2013-14 year to fund another 50 new projects and the existing core consultation multi-year agreements. There are three new core capacity multi-year agreements and 47 enhanced capacity projects, which include, for the first time, three First Nations and aboriginal organizations.

The New Relationship Fund is just another step in strengthening our government's relationship with aboriginal peoples.

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, we are all in this together—all Ontarians—aboriginals, Métis and First Nations. We're going to build a stronger Ontario for everyone.

PENSION PLANS

Mrs. Julia Munro: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. You and your government have had 10 years to come forward with a plan on retirement security. You've had a decade to reform our public sector pension system to reduce the \$100-billion unfunded liability. You've had a decade to address the lack of financial literacy in this province. You've had years to come forward with PRPP legislation. You have done nothing, while every year more and more people see their savings as inadequate for retirement.

Now, over the last few weeks, you are advocating CPP reform and possibly a new Ontario pension plan. Which-ever it is, it amounts to more mandatory deductions from Ontario workers and businesses.

On Monday, you said that an enhanced CPP is your first choice to help Ontarians be ready for their retirement. What is your second choice?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. I appreciate the work and concerns that the member opposite and all members of this House share, and that's the well-being of Ontarians in retirement. I think we can all agree, amongst the people in this House, and for that matter all across Ontario, all across Canada, Speaker, that there is a problem. The problem is, people don't have enough to retire—for those who are relying on CPP alone. As a consequence, the Ministers of Finance gathered here in Toronto last week, and we came to an agreement that we need to address it. We came to an agreement with principles that will be used when the Premiers meet at the Council of the Federation next week. That will also be the premise on which we speak with Minister Flaherty, your counterpart in the federal government, to encourage him to look at ways to enhance the CPP in a moderate way to protect Ontarians, while at the same time stimulating economic growth in our province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Well, that answer suggests to me that your second choice is the idea of a new Ontario pension plan, an OPP that would mimic the CPP. This idea of yours would be an additional payroll tax on employers. An Ontario plan would be new liability for the provincial government because it would pay the employer portion of the pension for its nearly 1.4 million employees.

You are aware that the province has a budget deficit of \$10 billion and a \$280-billion debt. Each year, the province pays nearly \$11 billion in interest on its debt. It is time for cost containment and wage freezes, but you still want to spend your way out of economic difficulty.

Premier, are you aware that a new Ontario pension plan would cost taxpayers an additional \$3.3 billion per year?

Hon. Charles Sousa: What I think the people of Ontario are looking for is leadership. They're not looking for the short-sighted vision that's being spewed by the opposition. What they're afraid of is making some tough decisions today for the benefit of our children of tomorrow.

We recognize that we are in economic times where we're trying to recover. We're making everything possible to stimulate that growth, but we're going to take leadership to try to protect the interest of Ontarians in the future, and, for that matter, all of Canada. The opposition would rather stay as it is and take things away from Ontarians and Canadians. The other side wants to give it away, no less. We have to take a balanced approach. We've got to look to the future. We will do that with or without you. We are looking at other opportunities. PRPPs are part of the mix, but we have to do better, and that's why we need to encourage everyone to come together and look at enhancing the CPP.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier and Minister of Agriculture and Food. Ontario's small food processors have been hit with constant regulation changes that are impractical, costly and do not improve food safety. Half of our 267 abattoirs in Ontario have shut down since 1998. The NDP included a motion in the Local Food Act that one of the goals and targets for the minister would be to reduce or streamline regulations, specifically for small abattoirs. That motion was defeated by the government.

You can't have local food without local processors. Is the Premier prepared to ensure that small processors can keep their doors open?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite is asking this question in the aftermath of my most recent meeting with the Open for Business round table. That table is specifically geared to government and our ministry working with the sector to make sure that regulations that need to be changed—or that need to be loosened or tightened—that that happens at that table and we come to some agreement. It is working very well.

In fact, there were a number of regulations, things like waste water, that have been raised with me and that have been changed, that are being changed because we heard from the sector that they weren't working. I can think of no better process than actually working with the people who are in the business giving us information about what government is doing that is either hampering them or helping them. We're going to continue in that manner.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, to the Minister of Agriculture and Food, I'd repeat: Rural areas need local food too.

I know that table is happening, but currently the regulations facing processors are one-size-fits-all and, quite frankly, that doesn't work for a lot of mom-and-pop shops that aren't necessarily now included in that open table process. Those are the ones that process local food for small communities. It's very important.

Once again, will the Premier ensure that those processors are also represented, like they could have been in the Local Food Act?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I really do appreciate the question, and this is something that has been raised with me a number of times as the Minister of Agriculture and Food. I understand the difference in the capacity of the smaller operators compared with the larger operators, so we're going to continue to work with them.

I also know that they are acutely aware of the need to have high safety standards and food security standards in place, and I know the member opposite appreciates that as well. We will continue to work with all of the processors, and as I say, the Open for Business round table is the place where that discussion needs to take place.

SPECIAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table a special report from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You may have noticed that there were two people in the Speaker's gallery; they had to leave.

One of them was a good school chum of mine, Mr. Pat Hickey, who was drafted in the NHL in 1973 and played until 1985. I beat him in basketball, but he beat me in hockey. He played for the Rangers, Rockies, Leafs, Nordiques and Blues.

With him was Matt Hurst, a colleague of his who is presently working in the capital markets.

The member from London-Fanshawe on a point of order.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to just add to the visitor introduction that I did that Riley plays both as a goalie with the Bantam AA Aurora Panthers and as a centre with the Weston Dodgers. She's a very busy girl.

DEFERRED VOTES

REGISTERED HUMAN RESOURCES
PROFESSIONALS ACT, 2013LOI DE 2013 SUR LES PROFESSIONNELS
EN RESSOURCES HUMAINES INSCRITS

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 32, An Act respecting the Human Resources Professionals Association/ Projet de loi 32, Loi concernant l'Association des professionnels en ressources humaines.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1140 to 1145.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would the members take their seats, please?

On November 5, Mr. Dhillon moved third reading of Bill 32.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gravelle, Michael	Milloy, John
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Moridi, Reza
Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Hatfield, Percy	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoun, Bas	Holyday, Douglas C.	Naqvi, Yasir
Bartolucci, Rick	Horwath, Andrea	Nicholls, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	O'Toole, John
Bisson, Gilles	Hudak, Tim	Orazielle, David
Bradley, James J.	Hunter, Mitzie	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Campbell, Sarah	Jackson, Rod	Pettaipiece, Randy
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jaczek, Helena	Piruzza, Teresa
Chan, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda	Prue, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob	Jones, Sylvia	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Sandals, Liz
Clark, Steve	Leal, Jeff	Sattler, Peggy
Colle, Mike	Leone, Rob	Schein, Jonah
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Scott, Laurie
Crack, Grant	MacLaren, Jack	Sergio, Mario
Damerla, Dipika	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Singh, Jagmeet
Delaney, Bob	Mantha, Michael	Smith, Todd
Dhillon, Vic	Marchese, Rosario	Sousa, Charles
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	Taylor, Monique
DiNovo, Cheri	McDonnell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
Duguid, Brad	McKenna, Jane	Vanthof, John
Dunlop, Garfield	McMeekin, Ted	Walker, Bill
Elliott, Christine	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Fife, Catherine	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine	Yakubski, John
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Norm	Yurek, Jeff
Fraser, John	Miller, Paul	Zimmer, David
Gélinas, France	Milligan, Rob E.	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 95; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, on a point of order.

Mr. Bill Walker: Mr. Speaker, on November 4 when speaking to Bill 36, I stated \$527 million. I'd like to correct my record: It should have been \$527,000.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As all members know, it's very in order to correct your record.

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1150 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

4-H

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I rise today to recognize the 100th anniversary of 4-H in Canada. The organization was founded in 1913, with an Ontario branch opening just two years later.

4-H is an important part of many communities throughout the province, including in my riding of Oxford. The organization teaches children valuable life lessons and skills by allowing children to learn to do by doing, which is the 4-H motto.

Today is 4-H wear green day, an annual event to raise support and awareness of 4-H. In honour of the 100th anniversary, many members of the PC caucus are wearing green today, the official colour of 4-H. In fact, the anniversary is particularly special for many of our members who are former 4-H participants. Some of those proud 4-H alumni include the members from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Kitchener–Conestoga, Carleton–Mississippi Mills, Dufferin–Caledon and the member from Huron–Bruce, who was a past chair of the Ontario 4-H Foundation.

4-H promotes growth and learning in a fun and safe environment, including countless contributions to rural Ontario. The program also teaches children about arts and culture, livestock and agriculture, food preparation and nutrition. Really, the list goes on and on.

4-H continues to shape our youth into wonderful members of our communities across the province. I'm happy to wear green today, in support of 4-H, and wish them all the best in the next 100 years. Congratulations.

SHINE THE LIGHT
ON WOMAN ABUSE CAMPAIGN

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This past Friday, I had the honour of joining members of the London community for the kickoff of the 2013 Shine the Light on Woman Abuse campaign. I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce this vital campaign to the members present.

Shine the Light on Woman Abuse is an initiative of the London Abused Women's Centre, an organization providing abused women with hope, and help for their

hurt, through the provision of advocacy, counselling and support services in a safe, non-crisis, non-residential setting in the London community.

Launched in 2010, the campaign aims to raise public awareness of male violence against women by turning cities, regions and countries purple for the month of November to stand in solidarity with abused women and support them in the understanding that the shame and/or blame they feel does not belong to them but to the perpetrators of their abuse, and to raise the profile of the community agencies that can provide abused women with help as they attempt to live their lives free of violence and abuse.

Each year, the shine the light campaign honours those women who have lost their lives to domestic abuse, and I would like to express my gratitude and support for the London Abused Women's Centre and its ongoing efforts to raise social awareness and eradicate violence against women.

I would also like to encourage my fellow MPPs to wear purple on November 15 and help spread the word about this important campaign in their respective communities.

CAREFIRST ONE-STOP MULTI-SERVICES CENTRE

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise today to join leaders from my community at the official groundbreaking at the Carefirst One-Stop Multi-Services Centre in Scarborough. This centre will combine community, social and health services at a one-stop, easy-to-access location that will serve my constituents in Scarborough-Agincourt.

This centre is only possible through this government's commitment to deliver health care and social services in the right place and at the right time.

This ambitious initiative is led by Carefirst Seniors and Community Services Association, and will provide programs to Chinese, Filipino, Tamil and many other ethnic community members who are traditionally underserved.

I want to congratulate Sunny Ho, Helen Leung and the entire team at Carefirst Seniors and Community Services Association, who made this one-stop, multi-service centre possible.

It is also through Carefirst's dedication and commitment to serve our community that they were successful in raising over \$6 million and further support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and Ontario Infrastructure loans. We expect this centre will be open in 2014, and I look forward to the many success stories that I'm also confident they will have in the years ahead.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Elgin-Kent-Middlesex.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Elgin-Middlesex-London.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Elgin-Middlesex-London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thanks, Speaker. I rise today about an issue of growing concern to residents in my riding and across the province. In October 2012, Health Canada approved the medication Esbriet for individuals with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. Esbriet is the first medication of its kind to be approved in Canada for the treatment of IPF to slow the progression of this fatal disease.

The Ministry of Health has refused to list Esbriet on the Ontario drug benefit formulary, and the expense of this medication is creating financial hardship for many individuals and their families. Most patients go without treatment.

There's an ever-growing list of newer, high-cost medications for the treatment of complex diseases not covered by the ODB plan. This list will continue to grow as technology improves drug development and gives the medical community new medications to treat and cure diseases that we never thought possible.

It is time for the government to review the Ontario Drug Benefit Program drug approval and reimbursement policy. This program has created a two-tier health care program: those who can afford life-saving, modernized medication to treat disease and those who will go without.

In the meantime, I call on the government to reconsider their position and include Esbriet in the ODB formulary.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Percy Hatfield: In my role as infrastructure critic, I had the opportunity to visit the thriving community of Thunder Bay, and I am in awe of the great potential for future development in northwestern Ontario.

There are nine mining projects ready to be online in the near future. That will lead to an investment of more than \$7 billion—that's billion, with a "b." More than 4,600 construction jobs will be created, and they'll need more than 3,500 people in operations. But the region needs more reliable energy sources and more roads and transmission lines.

Almost a year ago to the day, this Liberal government stopped the plan to convert the coal-burning Thunder Bay generating station to natural gas. Last month, the Minister of Energy told us that a decision would be made soon on what to do about that, but first he wanted more meetings—more conversations, more meetings, more delays.

The people I met with are tired of the delays. People in northwestern Ontario want leadership on this file. They want answers. They want decisions now, not next spring sometime on the eve of an election, so a tip of the hat to the hard-working people of northwestern Ontario.

I join my leader, Andrea Horwath, and my NDP colleagues in recognizing that although the Liberals don't have a plan, people in the Thunder Bay region do. They

have a plan for growth, but they need more reliable sources of energy to make it happen.

No more delays. Action for the north is required now.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It gives me great pleasure to rise in the Legislature today to share my experiences at the youth employment fund echo announcement that took place at the Career Foundation in my riding of Scarborough Southwest on Friday, October 18.

Located on Kingston Road, the Career Foundation has provided a number of individuals with the skills and resources necessary to make them more competitive in today's economy. The purpose of the event was to promote awareness of the Ontario Youth Jobs Strategy and the Ontario Youth Employment Fund.

I was pleased to hear from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities that over 1,200 young people had received job placements and gainful employment through this particular initiative. That means that as of last Friday, 2,414 individuals had been placed into this program, and that doubles our previous benchmark.

Let's be real for a moment, though. The province of Ontario is currently experiencing one of the highest levels of youth unemployment that we've seen in recent history. However, initiatives such as the youth employment fund are modest but promising examples of how our government is tackling youth unemployment head-on and making Ontario a more fair and prosperous province for all.

That's basically what I want to say this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to recognize the upcoming special day, Remembrance Day. In doing so, I have come to reflect on the many sacrifices made by men and women from communities across Ontario in times of war. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that we can't do enough in terms of saying thank you and recognizing these folks.

So I was heartened, a week ago, while I was running around Queen's Park on first floor, that there are some wonderful displays. One in particular caught my eye, and that display comes from Clinton, Ontario—more than just Alice Munro comes from Clinton, Ontario. Here, downstairs, I encourage everybody to take time to walk towards the west door. Specifically, you'll see a display that honours and reflects on something that is unique to Clinton, Ontario: the Clinton Station, which was established in 1941 by the Royal Air Force.

1510

Again, Clinton is a farming community, but as part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan to train Canadian radar operators and technicians, it was established right there in Clinton. The idea behind training was to prepare these people to go overseas. It was the

first radar base in North America, in what is today our riding of Huron—Bruce.

There's a display, as I said, in the lobby, along with other displays on the contributions of communities from across Ontario to recognize their efforts in World War II. I would encourage all of you to take a look as we pause to remember their heroic sacrifices. We can never forget.

TASTE OF STREETSVILLE

Mr. Bob Delaney: At western Mississauga's Credit Valley Hospital, now part of Trillium Health Partners, they think of the annual Taste of Streetsville restaurant promotion and fundraiser as "A Taste of Money." Ten of our most exquisite restaurants in historic Streetsville—155 years young—each year offer a three-course prix fixe menu for just \$25 per person. You heard that right: just \$25 per person. The promotion ran from September 9 through October 6. A portion of those proceeds goes to the redevelopment of the Credit Valley Hospital emergency ward.

It's how our neighbours in Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville pitch in together to build a great community. It's why people everywhere come to our three northwest Mississauga communities and wish that they could live there.

For 2013, the Taste of Streetsville raised \$2,222 for our local share of the Credit Valley Hospital emergency ward redevelopment. That donation will show up as expanded clinical support services, such as diagnostic imaging. It took more than 4,000 diners to come together and raise that money.

Kristin Scarfone, manager of community development, called it the most successful Taste of Streetsville ever. Ontario's thanks also go to Angie Trewartha and the Streetsville BIA for organizing the Taste of Streetsville in this year of 2013.

TAKE OUR KIDS TO WORK DAY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Today, all across Ontario, workplaces are changing, because today is Take Our Kids to Work Day. Workplaces are transforming into mini-classrooms as thousands of grade 9 students are finding out first-hand what it's like to have a job. Students are being welcomed into the varied workplaces of their parents or volunteer hosts. This is an exciting day for many students, because it provides them with an opportunity to experience first-hand different careers.

In Ontario, grade 9 students may for the first time consider a career path because they have the opportunity to observe and participate in a workplace. Educational experiences beyond the walls of our classrooms are recognized as valuable learning tools, and Take Our Kids to Work Day is an important extracurricular activity for students who are in the process of deciding and planning their futures.

I applaud the students, school boards, employers and employees who are participating today because they

recognize the importance of sharing on-the-job experience with our youth. I wish everyone a productive and safe Take Our Kids to Work Day. I know the lessons learned through this experience will be memorable for all, particularly the two hours of committee that my son is going to sit through this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We still don't disagree with his original statement.

I thank all members for their comments.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I beg leave to present a report on agencies, boards and commissions, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, from the Standing Committee on Government Agencies and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Berardinetti presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: No, thank you. I'd just like to move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Berardinetti moves the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (PERMANENT PARTIAL DISABILITY SUPPLEMENTS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL (SUPPLÉMENT POUR INVALIDITÉ PARTIELLE À CARACTÈRE PERMANENT)

Mr. Berardinetti moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 128, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to permanent partial disability supplements / Projet de loi 128, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail en ce qui concerne le supplément pour invalidité partielle à caractère permanent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: The bill amends section 110 of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 so that any pension a worker is eligible for under the Old Age Security Act of Canada does not reduce the worker's permanent partial disability benefits for pre-1985 and pre-1989 injuries under the pre-1997 act.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ABORIGINAL VETERANS

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, I want to make some remarks around Remembrance Day and the role of our aboriginal community in veterans' events. I want to acknowledge first that I am delivering my remarks on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of New Credit.

I rise today in the Legislature to recognize that November 8 is Aboriginal Veterans Day, an opportunity for Ontarians, and indeed all Canadians, to recognize the sacrifices of First Nation, Inuit and Métis veterans in protecting our freedoms.

Time and time again, aboriginal men and women have volunteered to fight alongside British and Canadian soldiers. In fact, many historians agree that if it weren't for the First Nation warriors and the Métis fighters who fought alongside British soldiers and Canadian militia during the War of 1812, there would be no country called Canada today. Aboriginal people and communities are proud of their military contributions and achievements, and rightly so. They are truly warriors.

As an example of the tradition of military service that exists, members of the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation, located on the Bruce Peninsula, served in the War of 1812, the 1991 Gulf War in the Middle East and every major conflict in between. As another example, during the First World War, more than 4,000 aboriginal people across Canada left their First Nations to join the fight, even though they were exempt from conscription.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I've had the honour of meeting several First Nation and Métis veterans. During the Métis Nation of Ontario's annual general assembly in August, I met 100-year-old Métis veteran Alex Boucher, who served in the Second World War. He was fit, he was vital and he was proud of his service. He had a chest full of medals that sparkled in the sunlight.

1520

It is vital that young people understand and appreciate the role that veterans, especially aboriginal veterans, have played in protecting Canadian freedoms. That's why I was so pleased to learn that Mr. Boucher and other Métis veterans had the opportunity to tour the Canadian War

Museum with the Métis youth in attendance at that AGM a couple of months ago.

Mr. Speaker, although war should never be glorified, it is important to take the time to recognize the sacrifices of veterans from all backgrounds. That's why we have produced a short video to raise awareness of the contributions of our aboriginal veterans. The video includes interviews with Six Nation veterans Jesse Green and M.C. White as well as Métis veteran Alis Kennedy. It also features Peter Ittinuar, who shares memories of his father, Ollie, who was a Canadian Ranger and the first person from Nunavut to be invested with the Order of Military Merit for his bravery on the battle scene.

The Canadian Rangers are volunteers who provide a military presence on Canada's sparsely populated northern coast and other isolated areas, including northern Ontario, where they provide formal support for the Ontario Provincial Police in very dangerous search and rescue operations. These brave men and women are often the first responders in northern remote communities, providing assistance during medical evacuations as well as when communities are under the threat of forest fires or flooding.

The video also includes an interview with Alison Baker, a teacher at Bala Avenue Community School in the Mount Dennis neighbourhood of Toronto. Ms. Baker is teaching her students about the sacrifices that veterans of all backgrounds made during the war. She also wants her First Nations students to be proud of and to recognize the heroism of veterans from their own culture. The video is available now on the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs' Tumblr site and will be featured on the government of Ontario's blog tomorrow.

Many aboriginal soldiers distinguished themselves on the battlefield by using their traditional hunting and military expertise to carry out very dangerous tasks. During the First World War alone, over 50 medals were awarded to aboriginal peoples in Canada for their bravery and heroic acts on the battlefield.

Mr. Speaker, on Aboriginal Veterans Day, November 8, I urge all people of Ontario and all Canadians to take some time and learn about the contributions and achievements of First Nation, Métis and Inuit veterans. Hundreds of aboriginal people across Canada have made the ultimate sacrifice: They have died, giving fully of their lives so that Canadians can experience peace and inherit freedom. For that, Speaker, Ontarians owe aboriginal veterans and veterans of all backgrounds an everlasting debt of gratitude.

Lest we forget.

CRIME PREVENTION WEEK
SEMAINE DE LA PRÉVENTION
DU CRIME

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to acknowledge Crime Prevention Week in Ontario, which runs from November 3 to 9. During this

week, we celebrate the partnership among police, community organizations and the people of Ontario as they work together to keep our communities and neighbourhoods safe. Throughout the week, the ministry is showcasing examples of these partnerships on our ministry website. It is through local collaboration and engagement that communities are able to develop an effective multi-sector approach to crime prevention and to build stronger and safer communities. I hope the message will resonate with all Ontarians.

Le gouvernement de l'Ontario reconnaît l'importance d'investir dans la prévention du crime et des initiatives de sécurité communautaire partout dans la province et joue un rôle actif dans le maintien de la sécurité des quartiers de l'Ontario.

Preventing crime is more effective than simply focusing on enforcement and punishment. As the old saying goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. A dollar invested now in crime prevention and early intervention avoids \$7 spent on prosecution, incarceration and other associated costs in the future. It is on the ground, at the community level, where we can make the biggest difference.

This year, under the proceeds-of-crime grants, approximately \$2.2 million has been allocated to 20 police services to implement projects related to crime prevention and community mobilization initiatives.

Since 2003, we have allocated approximately \$7 million in local, community-based, crime-prevention programs through our Safer and Vital Communities Grant.

The government has also invested over \$85 million in funding for other grant programs related to crime prevention, including the Toronto and provincial anti-violence intervention strategies and the Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere grant program.

In addition to our grant programs, ministry staff are meeting with police services, community groups and other interested parties across the province to continue the dialogue we started with the publication of our booklet *Crime Prevention in Ontario: A Framework for Action*.

We are now in phase 2. We are engaging various stakeholders through community consultations, and collecting input from Ontario's diverse urban, rural and remote communities, including aboriginal communities. It is important that we get this right by involving all of our stakeholders. These are not decisions the government or the police can make on their own.

Nous sommes tous partenaires dans la prévention du crime. C'est la raison d'être de la Semaine de la prévention du crime.

Ontario businesses, schools, community groups, police, and probation and parole officers need to continue to work together to protect our neighbourhoods, prevent at-risk Ontarians from becoming first-time offenders, and stop first-time offenders from becoming repeat offenders.

This week, I encourage all members to take part in Crime Prevention Week activities in their communities and to send a clear message that in Ontario we stand united in crime prevention.

MEDICAL RADIATION SCIENCES WEEK

Hon. Deborah Matthews: November 3 to 9 is Medical Radiation Sciences Week in Ontario, celebrated in conjunction with Medical Radiation Technologists Week in Canada. This week gives us an opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated medical radiation science practitioners, who play such a crucial role in the province's health care system.

Today, members of the Ontario Association of Medical Radiation Sciences are with us at Queen's Park to educate MPPs and raise awareness of the importance of their work to the health of Ontarians and the province's health care system.

Speaker, I believe we have people in the House with us today, so I'd like to welcome Greg Toffner, Julie Mathewson, Komal Mazhar, Marie Girotti, Cathy Baxter, Danica Prusic, Sheena Bhimji-Hewitt, Stephanie Mercier, Debbie Havill, Diana Farcas, Mary Markwart, Leonard Domino, Veni Li, Bernard Miller and everyone else from the Ontario Association of Medical Radiation Sciences. Thank you for coming to Queen's Park today.

In Ontario, approximately 5,800 medical radiation technologists are employed in hospitals, clinics, research labs, industry, education and administration. Nation-wide, there are about 11,000 technologists. Members of the association are an integral part of the health care team, adding their expertise in five disciplines of medical imaging and radiation science: radiography, magnetic resonance imaging, nuclear medicine, ultrasonography, and radiation therapy. The importance of their contributions to a safe and effective health care system cannot be overstated, and their dedication and commitment to the health of Ontarians deserve to be recognized and celebrated. Indeed, they form a vital link between care and technology. Our modern health care system simply could not function without their professional knowledge, skill and expertise.

1530

MRTs and ultrasonographers use radiation, electro-magnetism or sound waves to produce images of the body and to administer radiation for the treatment of disease. MRTs and ultrasonographers undergo rigorous training in anatomy, examination and treatment-delivery techniques, equipment protocols, radiation safety, radiation protection and patient care. By the time they're qualified to practise, they are very well versed in the application of new imaging and therapeutic technologies. By analyzing a variety of complex diagnostic images, they help clinicians to make the correct diagnosis so the right treatment can be applied.

Medical radiation science practitioners are highly dedicated, knowledgeable and competent health care professionals, and I'd like to briefly describe the work of their different disciplines.

Radiological technologists operate highly technical equipment, using film or computers to produce images of the body for the purposes of diagnosis and treatment. For example, they provide mammograms to women across the province.

Radiation therapists play a particularly important role in Ontario's cancer treatment system. They must have the knowledge to interpret the radiation treatment prescription, determine its appropriateness, counsel the patient regarding side effects, and monitor the patient's physical and psychological well-being during the entire course of treatment. In their careful hands, radiation helps to destroy tumours while minimizing harm to healthy tissues. Truly, they walk beside so many patients throughout their cancer journey. For that, they have my deepest gratitude.

Nuclear medicine technologists safely detect disease in its early stages. They use special cameras, computers and radioactive tracers to image how disease or treatment alters organ system function.

Ultrasonography is a highly evolving profession. Ultrasonographers use high-frequency sound waves to acquire real-time images of the human body. They have a wide range of specialties and therefore provide a wide range of services to Ontarians, including obstetrical, cardiac and musculoskeletal imaging.

Finally, magnetic resonance imaging, or MRI, technologists produce images using magnetic fields and radio-frequency pulses to aid in the diagnosis of disease. The safety and non-invasiveness of MRI makes it a valuable tool for physicians. MRI is the fastest-growing imaging modality, and it's replacing many invasive procedures in today's health care environment.

I'm proud to say that our government is making important strides in the area of medical radiation sciences. Our government is undertaking a review of the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act, or the HARP Act, in order to keep pace with the changes in Ontario's medical imaging system. That legislation protects the public by setting safety standards and by limiting who could prescribe the irradiation of persons and who can operate X-ray machines and equipment.

Phased consultative exercises began in December 2012 and are still under way. A broad range of stakeholders and experts in the field are being consulted about ways to modernize the legislation, including individuals and organizations representing the MRT profession.

Speaker, as we mark Medical Radiation Sciences Week in Ontario, let us thank these highly trained health care professionals who help keep Ontarians healthy. I'd also like to thank the members of the Ontario Association of Medical Radiation Sciences for coming to Queen's Park today and for your dedication to continued quality improvement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

ABORIGINAL VETERANS

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure in the short minute and a half I have to respond to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and to talk about Aboriginal Veterans Day.

Every year on November 8, we remember the First Nation, Métis and Inuit men and women who participated

in wars and armed conflicts throughout Canada's history. Over 7,000 recognized aboriginal people fought in the First and Second World Wars and in the Korean War as well as an unknown number of Inuit, Métis and non-status First Nations people. One aboriginal veterans group estimates that 12,000 aboriginals served in these three wars, and 500 lost their lives.

I would also like to note, of course, that the most highly decorated First Nations soldier in Canadian history was Francis "Peggy" Pegahmagabow from Wasauksing First Nation in my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. That is certainly something we're very proud of in the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka.

Also, I would like to note that the Canadian Forces Rangers, who are members of the Canadian Forces Reserve, maintain a national military presence in remote areas of northern Canada, and over half of the rangers are of aboriginal descent.

On behalf of PC leader Tim Hudak and the PC caucus, I would like to thank all First Nations, Métis and Inuit men and women for their long history of military service and for sacrificing their lives to ensure peace and freedom for all Canadians.

CRIME PREVENTION WEEK

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to respond to the minister's statement on Crime Prevention Week. I first want to acknowledge some leaders in Ontario's policing community who represent the men and women proudly serving Ontarians and police services across this province. They include OPP commissioner Chris Lewis and Ontario Provincial Police Association president Jim Christie; Police Association of Ontario acting president Dan Axford and their CAO, Paul Di Simoni; and Chief Paul Cook, president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police.

Our PC caucus has been a strong supporter of Ontario's police. As the new critic, I look forward to building on that relationship.

Crime Prevention Week highlights the fact that police work is more than just investigations and arrests—things that happen after a crime is committed. Some of the most important work police do is educating people about how to avoid becoming a victim of crime. I look at my own Brockville Police Service; their Lock It or Lose It initiative is just one example of that program.

We all applaud the fact that crime rates are falling, but we must recognize it doesn't happen by magic. It takes a lot of hard work. As we mark Crime Prevention Week, front-line police officers can count on our caucus to be strong advocates for them to have the resources they need to do their jobs and to keep Ontarians safe.

MEDICAL RADIATION SCIENCES WEEK

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to respond to the minister's statement with respect to Canadian Medical Radiation Sciences Week. Medical radiation science

practitioners are an integral part of our health care system. The Ontario Association of Medical Radiation Sciences represents the medical radiation technologists, radiation therapists and ultrasonographers.

The association has joined us today at Queen's Park—and we thank you very much for your presence here today—to educate members on why sonographers should be governed under the Regulated Health Professions Act. Digital medical sonographers are often required to perform invasive procedures that require the use of controlled acts listed under the RHPA. Sonographers work in hospitals, independent health facilities, research labs, educational institutions and commercial sectors.

The association would like to see sonographers regulated through a regulatory college, which they believe will legitimize standards, create accountability and better serve the public interest. Sonography is part of the multidisciplinary approach to diagnostic imaging, which includes the existing regulated medical radiation technology specialists of radiological technology, magnetic resonance imaging, or MRI, radiation therapy and nuclear medicine.

In conclusion, I would like to thank everyone representing the Ontario Association of Medical Radiation Sciences for joining us today at Queen's Park and for raising these important issues.

ABORIGINAL VETERANS

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm pleased to rise and speak in support of Aboriginal Veterans Day, which is taking place on November 8. Aboriginal veterans have served in Canada's military forces in great numbers since the War of 1812. It is thanks to their unwavering commitment and contributions that Canada is what it is today.

A colleague once told me about a Canadian aboriginal war veteran who chose to serve in the Korean War. He was one of an estimated 12,000 aboriginal people from across Canada to serve in this war and the First and Second World Wars, and his story is reflective of the special circumstances and challenges that this group of veterans faced. This young man, barely 20, spent very little of his brief life in the world beyond his tiny First Nation community, and some of his community members questioned his commitment to a cause so far away from home and his own people.

1540

His company came under fire on the train platform soon after arriving in Korea, and within weeks he had been wounded by sniper fire and a grenade blast. Then the plane that was airlifting him back to his home country crashed.

His family was notified of his death after a search for the wreckage failed to locate it. When a later search proved successful in finding both the wreckage and survivors, news did not immediately make it back to his small Canadian First Nation community. Imagine the shock as this decorated soldier walked into the house during his own funeral. This veteran said that he had

essentially crossed through two worlds as part of his service, one in Canada and a second in Korea.

Hundreds of Canadian aboriginal war veterans never did make it home after making this commitment, and hundreds more have been decorated with honours and awards for their bravery and special services. Across my riding of Kenora–Rainy River, there are hundreds of stories of aboriginal war veterans, both men and women, who have served and continue to serve. As should be the case for all who make this sacrifice, these veterans should be acknowledged and commended, but with a clear understanding of their special circumstances.

Lest we forget.

CRIME PREVENTION WEEK

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to offer my comments on behalf of Andrea Horwath and the NDP caucus in recognition of Crime Prevention Week in Ontario. This week acknowledges that proactively preventing crime contributes more to community safety and well-being than enforcing the law once a crime has been committed. It also recognizes that the most effective crime prevention strategies involve partnerships among police, school boards, community organizations, health and social service professionals, residents, businesses, and others.

The crime prevention strategies being showcased this week across Ontario generally fall into three categories.

Traditional approaches involve the police, the courts and the correctional system. Under Ontario's new model of community policing, this approach is placing greater emphasis on community engagement, consultation and mobilization.

The second approach is situational, involving strategies that range from common sense safety precautions to comprehensive community planning.

The third approach, crime prevention through social development, is also the most effective. It is focused on changing the underlying conditions that are the root causes of crime, such as poverty, poor parenting, inadequate housing, family violence, substance abuse, negative school experiences, unemployment and social exclusion.

We all have a part to play in finding new, innovative and collaborative ways to work together to prevent crime and make Ontario neighbourhoods safe.

MEDICAL RADIATION SCIENCES WEEK

M^{me} France Gélinas: Mr. Speaker, I will use wisely my minute and 25 seconds left.

I'd like to start by thanking Greg Toffner and Stephanie Mercier, who came to see me to make sure that they had our support from the NDP to bring sonographers into the realm of people under the Regulated Health Professions Act, and I assured them that I will do everything in my power to help them achieve that.

Medical Radiation Sciences Week is a good time to say thank you to all of the medical radiation technologists. They are the people behind the high-tech medical diagnostic tests that we go to. So if it is a child playing hockey and with a suspected broken bone, you will see a radiology technician for your X-ray or MRI. If it's the one in five Canadians who faces cancer, there's a good chance that you will see a radiation technologist; they are the ones who give you your radiation therapy if the oncologist decides that you need this. Same thing with a sonographer: They are the people that you go to. As people age and start to worry about their heart health, they often go for an echocardiogram. They are the people who do that kind of work. And of course, one that is very close to my heart is nuclear medicine, including PET scans, and you all know how this technology should be accessible to everyone in Ontario, including people in the northeast.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham, off and running.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, thank you very much. I was paying attention today. I'd like to present a petition on behalf of my constituents, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the economic benefit of the retained nuclear scenario is \$60 billion. Eliminating the wind options in the long-term energy plan (LTEP) will have a positive economic benefit of \$21 billion. Forgoing the nuclear option in the LTEP will have an economic loss" for Ontario "of \$38 billion;

"Whereas the Durham region economy is based on the new build. It was Premier Wynne who cancelled the new build at Darlington, costing Ontario 20,000 direct and indirect jobs associated with the new build;

"Whereas this severely limits employment opportunities for university graduates from the University of Ontario Institute of Technology who were to gain experience in Darlington nuclear's training centre;

"Whereas in addition to refurbishing the four existing reactors at Darlington the building of new capacity is important for the future of Ontario's manufacturing sector and for jobs and investment in our Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Ontario's elected MPPs and the provincial government reaffirm their commitment to the complete refurbishment of all four units at the Darlington generating station"—as well as the ones at the other facility—"and that the Ontario government reinstate the original

plan for the completion of the two new reactors at the Darlington generating station.”

I’m happy to present this to Arianna, one of the pages.

TAXATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the cost of living in northwestern Ontario is significantly higher than other regions of the province due to the high cost of necessities such as hydro, home heating fuel, gasoline and auto insurance; and

“Whereas an increase in the price of any of these essential goods will make it even more difficult for people living in northwestern Ontario to pay their bills and put food on the table;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To reject any proposed increase to the harmonized sales tax, gas tax or any other fees or taxes in the north-west; and instead investigate other means such as increasing corporate tax compliance or eliminating corporate tax loopholes in order to fund transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.”

I support this petition, will affix my signature and give it to page Jake to deliver to the table.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s Drive Clean Program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

“Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

“Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions is the result of factors other than Drive Clean, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

“Whereas the current government has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable, and prone to error; and

“Whereas the Auditor General identified that Drive Clean has had little to no impact on the reduction of emissions in Ontario and that the program’s pass rate has exceeded 90% every year since 2004; and

“Whereas the Auditor General’s No. 1 recommendation is for the government to ‘formally evaluate the extent to which the Drive Clean program continues to be an effective initiative’;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program.”

I affix my signature in support.

ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES

Mr. Michael Mantha: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas these vehicles are as safe as any motorcycle carrying a passenger since all of the manufacturers of the ‘2-up machines’ have redesigned their original models by extending the wheel bases, beefing up their suspension to allow the carriage of passengers on the machine safely and providing a rear seat, many with handholds;

“Whereas the privilege to ride on secondary highways and trails with two people on a recreational vehicle is denied to off-road vehicles (ORV) operators but is granted to snowmobiles;

“Whereas the definition of an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) in regulation 316/03 no longer reflects the majority of ATVs being marketed and sold in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“Amend the definition of an ATV to include those that are: (a) designed to carry a passenger; (b) with more than four tires and designed to carry passengers; (c) without a straddle seat; and (d) carries passengers and has a steering wheel.”

I agree with this petition and present it to page Ian to bring it down to the Clerk.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario ranks ninth of 10 provinces in terms of the total per capita funding allocated to long-term care; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care data shows that there are more than 30,000 people in Ontario waiting for long-term-care placements and wait-times have tripled since 2005; and

“Whereas there is a perpetual shortage of staff in long-term-care facilities and residents often wait an unreasonable length of time to receive care—e.g. to be attended to for toileting needs; to be fed; to receive a bath; for pain medication. Since 2008, funding for 2.8 paid hours of care per resident per day has been provided. In that budget year, a promise was made to increase this funding to 4.0 hours per resident per day by 2012. This has not been done; and

1550

“Whereas the training of personal support workers is unregulated and insufficient to provide them with the skills and knowledge to assist residents who are being admitted with higher physical, psychological and emotional needs. Currently, training across the province is varied, inconsistent and under-regulated;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“(1) immediately increase the number of paid hours of nursing and personal care per resident per day to 4.0 hours (as promised in 2008);

“(2) develop a plan to phase in future increases so that the number of paid hours per resident per day of nursing and personal care is 5.0 hours by January 2015;

“(3) establish a licensing body, such as a college, that will develop a process of registration, accreditation and certification for all personal support workers.”

I agree with this and will be passing it on to page Jack.

LONG-TERM CARE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from—let’s see. Oh, okay, Sud—Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope you were just toying with my emotions there, because if you don’t know where I’m from, you and I need to talk.

Here’s a petition from the people of the northeast.

“Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

“Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently don’t complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

“Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada—including the three territories—where our Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand the Ombudsman’s mandate to include Ontario’s long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Jake to bring it to the Clerk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): My thanks to the member, and I certainly know where she’s from.

FISHING REGULATIONS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary is printed each year by the Ministry of Natural Resources and distributed to recreational fishermen throughout the province to inform them of all the relevant seasons, limits, licence requirements and other regulations; and

“Whereas this valuable document is readily available for anglers to keep in their residence, cottage, truck, boat, trailer or on their person to be fully informed of the current fishing regulations; and

“Whereas the MNR has recently and abruptly drastically reduced the distribution of the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary such that even major licence issuers and large fishing retailers are limited to one case of regulations per outlet; and

“Whereas anglers do not always have access to the Internet to view online regulations while travelling or in remote areas;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately return the production of the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary to previous years’ quantities such that all anglers have access to a copy and to distribute them accordingly.”

I affix my signature in full support.

MINIMUM WAGE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Parkdale—High Park. I got that one right, didn’t I?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: You did indeed, Mr. Speaker. Praise be.

This is a petition to raise the minimum wage.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s minimum wage has been frozen at \$10.25 an hour since 2010, and some workers earn even less due to current exemptions in the Employment Standards Act; and

“Whereas full-time minimum wage workers are living at nearly 20% below the poverty line as measured by the Ontario government’s low-income measure (LIM); and

“Whereas minimum wage should, as a matter of principle, bring people working 35 hours per week above the poverty line; and

“Whereas an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$14 per hour would bring workers’ wages 10% above the LIM poverty line; and

“Whereas raising the minimum wage will benefit workers, local businesses and the economy by putting money in workers’ pockets to spend in their local community;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately increase the minimum wage to \$14 per hour for all workers and thereafter increase it annually by no less than the cost of living.”

I’m going to give this to Tristan, affixing my signature, to be delivered to the table.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas industrial wind turbine development on the sacred land of Mnidoo Mnis (Manitoulin Island) has disrupted our peaceful life, dividing First Nation and non-First Nation communities and families; and

“Whereas there is growing opposition to Northland Power’s McLean’s Mountain industrial wind turbine project; and

“Whereas it would be a very sad chapter in our history if we stand by and let the pursuit of money destroy this beautiful land; and

“Whereas the Manitoulin Coalition for Safe Energy Alternatives, the Wikwemikong Unceded First Nation elders, community members and youth, the North Channel Preservation Society and others stand together to preserve and protect the healthy environment along with

traditional culture and heritage values which we cherish so greatly;

"We, the undersigned, hereby oppose industrial wind farm development on Mnidoo Mnis (Manitoulin Island)."

I agree with this, sign my name to the petition and give it page Jake.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm still receiving hundreds of these petitions. They petition ServiceOntario cuts.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

"Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses and local economies;

"Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

"Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

"Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services."

I agree with this petition and present it to page Victoria to bring down to the Clerks.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a privilege to begin and end with a petition.

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean program was intended originally as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they no longer are among the major domestic contributors to smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test introduced by the McGuinty/Wynne government in January of 2013 using vehicles' onboard computers has caused numerous false fails; and

"Whereas this new test has led to higher costs and economic hardship for Ontario drivers and car dealers; and

"Whereas this government has collected an estimated \$19 million in windfall profits from Drive Clean, despite the fact that revenue-neutral programs like Drive Clean are not permitted to produce profits;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to end the Drive Clean cash grab and take immediate action to phase out this program altogether."

I'm pleased to sign and support it on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

HOME CARE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): My favourite member, from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You're also my favourite Speaker.

I have a petition that comes from all over Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many Ontarians need health care services at home and 6,100 people are currently on wait-lists for care;

"Whereas waiting for over 200 days for home care is unacceptable;

"Whereas eliminating the wait-lists won't require any new funding if the government caps hospital CEO salaries, finds administrative efficiencies in the local health integration networks (LHINs) and community care access centres (CCACs), standardizes procurement policies and streamlines administration costs;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly:

"That a five-day home care guarantee is established and existing wait-lists eliminated so that Ontarians receive the care they need within a reasonable time frame."

I'm happy to sign this petition and give it to Tristan to bring to the Clerk.

LYME DISEASE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe;

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of its professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process for establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

1600

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct that the Ontario public health system and OHIP include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything

necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians.”

I agree with this petition and I affix my signature.

OPPOSITION DAY

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon the government,

To recognize that the Premier and the Liberal government put their political interests ahead of taxpayers’ interests by cancelling the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants during the 2011 election and failing to provide taxpayers with the true costs;

To recognize that the Premier bears responsibility for the gas plant cancellations...; and

Therefore, it is the opinion of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that Ontarians no longer trust the Premier or the Liberal government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Hudak has moved opposition day number 2. Mr. Hudak.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, I have a vision of an Ontario with more jobs and with better take-home pay; a strong, confident province of Ontario with the capability of supporting its most vulnerable citizens, where the generosity of Ontarians meets their means to help seniors, to help those with disabilities, to build a stronger Ontario.

But to get there, it is never more clear than after the gas plant scandal that we’ll only get that Ontario when we change the team that leads this province.

Today is the day to show the people of Ontario that at least one party—at least the PC Party—is on their side. The motion and today’s debate is the only way that we can demonstrate to hard-working Ontario families, to seniors and to men and women that their cries that “enough is enough” have finally been heard.

This will put the members of the House to the test. The cost of the Liberals’ self-interest and their willingness to give almost any deal to hang on to their government is huge. That’s why we’re here today. That’s why my colleagues are here today. That’s why I am here today, because I want to put it to the public straight that it’s time for the Premier to stand up and to explain herself when it comes to her role in the cancellation of the gas plants that cost us \$1.1 billion. I look forward to the Premier’s comments.

Quite frankly, the same goes for the NDP leader, Andrea Horwath. Where exactly will she finally draw the line? The time has come for the leader of the third party in this House to stand up and tell Ontarians exactly whose side she is on.

A motion on the floor of the House is one of the strongest tools that we have at our disposal for accountability as legislators. So the question we’ll resolve today:

Whose side is this House on? An up-or-down vote of all MPPs, of all parties, to tell the people in the ridings: Are they here for the people or are they here as MPPs for themselves, lining up at the trough of the Liberals? It’s a straight-up question, so I’m looking forward to a straight-up answer from the other two parties.

Quite frankly, I hear this everywhere I go. The people of Ontario want to know whether the leader of the NDP is on the side of the people—with me, with us—or is she on the side of the Liberal Party? Has she lost her moral compass and will she continue to support the Liberals, no matter what they do? We’ll find out later this afternoon.

Clearly, Speaker, changes must be made. When I talk about change, I’m concerned that the only time the NDP talk about change is when their definition of “change” simply means how you change your backroom deal with the Liberals: What else is the price to prop them up time and time again? I could be proven wrong. Maybe they’ll stand up on their feet and be on the side of taxpayers instead of being on the side of the Liberals every single time.

But change does not mean more reckless government spending. Change does not mean more lost jobs for Ontario men and women. It doesn’t mean more wasteful scandals that seem to cost us a billion dollars in taxpayers’ money each and every single time, just to save a couple of Liberal seats in the last election campaign. That’s not change. The change that we support is changing the team that leads this province. Change means electing a leader who will actually get our great province back on track. That’s the kind of change we need.

More jobs, with better take-home pay, putting entrepreneurs back in business and our books back in balance—that’s what we stand for. That’s why we’re standing on our feet today and saying “enough is enough” with this motion.

Ontario needs to know exactly where the NDP stands. Are they finally ready to do this and say Ontario deserves better? Ontario’s hard-working families need to know. Our seniors need to know. Men and women need to know. Those without a job need to know. We want to know, so let’s hear from the leader of the NDP to tell us exactly where they’re going to stand. We know where we stand: for a better Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I’m happy to speak to the motion, and I’m always very cautious, because every time I speak against something the Tories introduce, I am afraid to insult them or to offend them. I try to be as gentle as I can—through you, Speaker—but there are times when it’s hard to do. So if I offend, you’ll have to forgive me.

On this motion, there are things about this motion that New Democrats agree with. The gas plant scandals in Oakville and Mississauga were serious—are serious. They continue to be a big problem for people in Ontario. The waste—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Everybody listened so intently when you were speaking, the Leader of the Opposition. Now the decibel level has gone up when the member from the NDP is speaking. I'd like a little quiet. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The waste of \$1.1 billion is a serious matter, and I believe the Liberals will be hurt when there is an election. And when we will have this election, whenever the time happens to be, my view is that the public will punish them—I have no doubt about that—in the same way that the public punished the Conservatives for those painful eight and a half years. When the Conservatives say that people lost trust in the Liberals after 10 years, I lost trust in the Conservative Party in three and a half weeks when they were there. Of course, it's all relative, depending on where you stand in this place. But we all lose trust with each other, and political parties eventually will lose trust—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You might want to get back in your seat if you want to yell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I don't care about the facts.

Continue.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. You see? I do my best not to offend, but I know it hurts.

As the Tories have lost trust in the Liberals, I just wanted to point out that I lost trust in the Conservatives when they were in power in very short order, and I had to tolerate them for eight and a half long years. It was painful to me and to many who live in my riding. Of course, eventually there's an election. That's what happens, and then they judge the political party.

The good thing is that the Conservative Party finally realized—it doesn't take much, but they finally realized they can't introduce a motion of want of confidence of the government. They can't. That's the law. They, I think, are smart enough to know it, but if they want to play politics, as they do and they've done, they can say, "We want to do it, but the NDP doesn't want to do it." You can't have a motion of want of confidence of the government. The government can introduce any motion at any time with a want-of-confidence component contained in it. We can't do that. So they cleverly drafted a message saying, "We lost trust in the Liberal government." That's okay. That's clever and it's smart, and it allows the Conservative Party to attack the Liberals. It allows us to attack the Liberals as well on this scandal.

1610

I have to admit, when the Premier stands up on a regular basis and talks about how, when new evidence is before us, we have to take the new evidence into account and therefore we have to deal with the new evidence, what, pray tell, is the new evidence that the Premier got

that she didn't have four years ago? Ah, children and families all of a sudden appeared.

I would imagine there were families and kiddies over there at the time when they made the decisions to have those gas plants, but all of a sudden an emergence of new evidence appears. Kids and families have appeared on the scene, and we have to change our minds. That was the new evidence. It just doesn't make any sense and it makes the Liberals look bad, so it gives me an opportunity to attack them as well. It's not a problem; I like to do that as well.

But you guys, all you do is goof around. I have to use the vernacular here. You're just goofing around. That's all I can say. You infantilized the issues last week when you introduced another motion to simply say that the Liberals should be paying for that \$1.1 billion. That is infantile. Please. You know you can't do that because if you were to do that and you were serious, people would immediately say, "Hold on a moment. Highway 407 happened, and that was a giveaway of a beautiful deal, of a 100-year deal, to the private sector—100 years." Your fine Tories, your Mike Harris regime, gave that private toll away for 100 painful, long years. You have given public money away to the private sector for a whole long time. Why would you do that? Are you saying New Democrats should have said, "You should be paying that out of your pocket"? It's silly; you understand that? It's infantile. When you play those games—through you always, Speaker—when they play those games, it's difficult for people like me. I can't deal with it very well.

What does the Conservative Party do? With a bill called Bill 74—it is amazing how they could tease and make fun of New Democrats for being in collusion with the Liberals, yet with Bill 74, that certainly wasn't collusion with the Liberals, was it? Oh, no. It certainly wasn't establishing common ground, was it? Oh, no. It wasn't simply conniving with the Liberals to bring forth Bill 74 that would, in effect, give a whole lot of good to EllisDon, who, by the way, brings in \$2.3 billion in profits. That's what they hold in profits. God bless; they're doing okay. Yet the Tories colluded with the Liberals to bring about such a bill.

By the way, I feel the pain of Tories. I do, because the government let them down. They had a deal. It was sealed. It was a sealed deal. And then the Premier said, "Okay, I changed my mind," and the Tories got stuck with that problem. So they were the only ones who said, "Jeez, now are we the only ones who are going to be seen as helping our developer friends?"

It doesn't look good, because—understand this, Speaker—the Liberals get more money from developers than the Tories do. They both do incredibly well. The highest amount of money that comes to this party and that party comes from developers and the development industry. But they get a little more—not by much. They are neck and neck.

But when they introduced Bill 74, they got stuck holding that stinky bag all to themselves. You understand that they have no problem colluding with the govern-

ment? When they say, "But the NDP is propping up the Liberals," that's supposed to be okay, but when they prop up the Liberals to a certain end, i.e. Bill 74, that's not okay? That's different? That is totally different? You see how you play games. That's why I say they're goofing around. They're spitting nickels each and every day in this Legislature. Each and every day, as our leader said, they stand on their heads and spit nickels. Would that they did something useful for a change.

In the last three years—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Simcoe—Grey.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —they've done absolutely nothing to deliver anything good to the public—nada. In two years, through two budgets, when the NDP decided that we wanted to change—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'm sorry, folks. I've really put up with quite a bit today. Here's the bottom line: I'm going to start keeping track, and you'll get one warning—I've already given a couple—and the next one is "Hasta la vista." That's the way it's got to be, because I'm losing control of this, and I don't want this to go the way it's going.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The members know very well, being experienced, that if they want to talk, get in their own seats—especially those two.

Continue.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What we got is a surtax. Those who are millionaires, those who earn over \$500,000, get to pay a little more. We imposed that surtax on the Liberals as a way of making sure that if they wanted our support, we'd get something for working men and women. We have made it possible for millionaires to pay a little more than often gouging those who earn \$40,000 or \$50,000. We got the Liberals to freeze the corporate tax cut that Tories wanted to slip down, and Liberals as well. Between the two of them, they wanted corporate taxes to go down. Who's helping the little guy? It's this party, not that party and the Liberals.

We said to the Liberals, "If you want our support, we want more support for home care, we want jobs for young people and we certainly want auto insurance rates to go down." This is something that we call a victory for people in Ontario. This is not about us; it's about helping working men and woman. That's what we're doing that's positive.

The Tories? They just goof around, spit nickels all day long.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It is a pleasure, as a Mississauga member and a proud citizen of the city of Mississauga, to join this debate on this motion, which is, as my colleague from Trinity-Spadina put it so eloquently, "nothing but rhetoric." It is pure rhetoric.

Let's start with a review of what actually happened here. In 2003, many people remember the big blackout. I certainly remember it. We were blacked out into our third day, and one of the first lessons learned out of that blackout is that that area called the southwest GTA, which for all practical purposes means Mississauga and Oakville, didn't have sufficient power generation or transmission.

Following that summer of 2003, when the voters of Ontario looked at the absolute mess that the Conservative government had made of electricity, they tossed them out and elected us to fix this problem. Now, going into that summer of 2004, one of the important priorities of our Ministry of Energy and the then minister Dwight Duncan was: How do we prevent the system, which had been run into the ground for more than 10 years, from simply falling apart? It was at that point that the Ministry of Energy issued a call for proposals for peak power generation in that southwest GTA. For all practical purposes, that means Mississauga and Oakville.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Of the four proposals accepted, two were abandoned, and that left two: one in Oakville and one in Mississauga. Now, Speaker, who put those plants there? The answer is: the proponents. The proponents had to find land zoned by the municipality for power production and legally acquire the land and apply for and receive from the municipality permission to build the plants where they had proposed.

The land in Oakville had been specifically zoned for industrial uses. The land in Mississauga on 2315 Loreland Avenue had been zoned "industrial/power plant." The proponents—TransCanada Energy in Oakville, Eastern Power in Mississauga—legally bought the land and legally worked with both cities to build power plants.

1620

Now, just to sort of make this point very clear, let me read from a document that came out in the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. My colleagues opposite in the Conservative Party know this document perfectly well because it's now a public document. This is a letter from the city of Mississauga, from the planning and building department. It's signed by one Barbara Leckey, supervisor of zoning, planning and building department, dated July 12, 2005, addressed to Eastern Power. The letter reads, in part, referring to 2315 Loreland Avenue, the site at which that power plant was proposed to have been built: "Upon removal of the holding symbol, the lands may be used for"—this is the operative part—"among other things, manufacturing or industrial undertakings, which would include the generation and distribution of electrical power."

So, who put the power plant where it was proposed in the city of Mississauga? The answer is, the city of Mississauga's planning and building department did just that. They had zoned the land, as had the town of Oakville, "industrial" or, again, in the case of Mississauga, "industrial/power plant." That's how those two power plants came to be sited where they were.

As a Mississauga resident, I think that Oakville plant was far too large and certainly inappropriate for that place that it was proposed. The town of Oakville—Mayor Rob Burton, who led the council then, said the same thing. They said, “That plant is inappropriate for the place that the proponent had proposed it.” The town of Oakville then enacted some bylaws and said, “We’re going to stop you from building it.” The proponent said, “But you can’t stop us. You zoned the land for it. We were able to buy the land.”

In the city of Mississauga, the same occurred. Eastern Power, facing opposition from the city of Mississauga after this letter, after the letter of 2005 saying, “Go ahead and build a power generation plant,” when Mississauga changed its mind, said to the city of Mississauga, “See you at the Ontario Municipal Board.”

The Ontario Municipal Board reviewed the zoning from the city of Mississauga and said to the city, “You zoned this for a power plant. They legally bought the land. They have a fair and a legal contract to build a power plant on land they bought, on land you zoned for a power plant.” It was at that point that both the town of Oakville and the city of Mississauga came to see the province and said, “Help us here. We don’t have a recourse. If we simply continue on our present course, they’re going to build that power plant,” both on Loreland Avenue in Mississauga and on what were called the Ford lands, near the merger of Highway 403 and the QEW in Oakville.

The plant in Oakville was some 50 or 55 metres from the nearest commercial establishment and far, far too close to residential establishments. To put some size on it, the Oakville plant had 850 megawatts. That proposal was about the same size as building a Bruce nuclear reactor on that site—clearly off-base.

Faced with that dilemma, the city of Mississauga and the town of Oakville asked the province, “What action can be taken here?” And the province advised them, “You guys zoned it.” They said, “Yes, well, that was before we had had the type of growth that we have had since the plan was last reviewed.”

So let’s understand this. What’s the first lesson to be learned here? The lesson to be learned is that cities have to take a much more proactive part in the zoning of land for energy infrastructure and have to treat the delivery and transmission of electricity, as well as its generation, in the same fashion as they handle water and sewer and waste removal and other municipal services. One of the things that have come out in the justice committee is that in fact they don’t have to do this. This is almost surely a recommendation to come out of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy’s look at these two plants.

Having established that the plants were put where they were by the two municipalities on land that was legally acquired by the proponent, let’s look at some of the other things in this motion. Most people in Ontario don’t realize that PC Party leader Tim Hudak was personally prepared to pay \$1 billion to cancel each plant—\$2 billion in total—\$2 billion—and that’s with no electricity having been generated. He’s on record as having said it.

So, Speaker, the challenge before the province is: Okay, we’ve got two plants that were contracted for. They’re not properly located. What do we do here? Do we just pay the people for the money they put into them and stop building them, in which case we’ve paid out a lot of money but we don’t get any electricity? How do we get electricity into Mississauga and Oakville?

One of the answers was a transmission corridor from the Bruce Peninsula to connect into the big substation at Milton. We now have a transmission solution that, from the vantage point of those of us in Mississauga and Oakville, will at least allow us to transmit electricity from Bruce and get it into the city. Now, that made a big difference in the blackout in July. We were able to get back online within about six hours in most places. We may still—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It appears that there are a few members who come into the House and don’t acknowledge the Chair. That’s not acceptable, so we’ll be monitoring that. Thank you.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, having now established that the PCs were willing to pay twice as much money to get no electrons—no electricity—the province, working with the two cities, was at least able to offer the two proponents contracts of roughly equal value located somewhere else, and that at least got us electricity for having made the investment.

Let’s talk about some of those costs. I’ve heard some strange numbers floated around. Not a single one of the numbers advanced by the opposition can be found in either Auditor General’s report. Does Ontario know where they get that number? I’ll tell you where they get that number. They add up all the costs and don’t subtract any of the savings. They consider all of the costs spread out over 20 years to be equivalent to having been paid out in front, which in fact is not the case.

The sunk costs for Oakville and Mississauga have already been paid out: Oakville two years ago and Mississauga last year. The balance of the costs, which would average, depending on whose numbers you choose to work with, somewhere between \$15 million and \$30 million per year out over 20 years, are offset by savings with the renegotiation of the Samsung agreement and the reworking of the requirements for domestic content. They amount to a savings—savings—of about \$5.6 billion spread out over 20 years. So we’ve got costs of some \$15 million to \$30 million, as opposed to savings on an average basis per year of \$280 million. Somehow or other, that takes one of the clauses in this and just shoots it completely down.

Now, the motion before us talks about the Liberals putting political interests ahead of taxpayers. You know, Speaker, when I go and stand in front of my residents and say that I’m proud to have supported the cancellation of that plant, they say, “Good for you, man. That was the right decision. That wasn’t needed in our community, and you stood up for us.” That’s something the Conservatives did not do.

If political interests actually meant something, Speaker, would you please tell me whose ridings were at

stake? They have never been able to do that. Which sitting MPPs stood to lose their ridings if something didn't happen? These people have never done that, and the reason is that they can't. The reason is because the member from Mississauga South won with the largest plurality of the elections he has contested. The member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore was elected with more than 50% of the vote. The member for Etobicoke Centre was elected with the largest plurality she ever had. I was out canvassing in Mississauga East-Cooksville with our candidate, and the matter never came up. So I ask again, Speaker: If seats were at stake, tell us which ones. The answer is that they can't.

You know, Speaker, the easiest thing for the government to have done in this case was absolutely nothing. But we're Liberals; we don't do that. We had a serious power shortage brought on by years of Conservative incompetence. We addressed it. There were two decisions that went wrong—I pointed out some of the reasons why—and we fixed them. And I'm quite willing to go to the doors to talk about that, whether it be next spring or whenever.

1630

If they want to talk about bad decisions, we can always pick up where my friend from Trinity-Spadina left off and talk about Highway 407, the single largest privatization boondoggle in the history of the world. We still have 86 more years of paying for it—and paying and paying and paying and paying.

Speaker, this resolution is nothing more than empty rhetoric from a party that's out of ideas, out of gas and soon to be out of time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It was an honour for me to not only follow my leader but listen to the amazing works of fiction by my two predecessors who spoke today: the member from Trinity-Spadina and, of course, the member from Mississauga, who might be enlightened to know that his former leader, his current leader, his former finance minister and many members of the public service have told us that the cancellation of those gas plants were "political." They were political.

I also would remind the member that it is very clear that the members from Mississauga and Oakville who were returned to this House in the last election were returned because of extensive lobbying by those members—because they were afraid—to win their seats.

Just as an aside, my seatmate and I often like to point out that I had the highest vote total in all of Ontario; he had the highest percentage. So if you want to start talking about pluralities, we don't mind having that discussion, because, I'll tell you one thing, it was very clear in most of Ontario that members of the public wanted a change.

All we seem to have gotten from this Liberal government is evading the answers that we have been asking through our questions. They refuse to hold a judicial inquiry. They refuse to put a confidence motion on the floor of the assembly. They refuse to answer our ques-

tions, whether it is in this House or it is in the justice committee. But we do continue to get snippets.

This is what we have learned. People like Serge Imbrogno, people like Shelly Jamieson, people like Colin Andersen and people like JoAnne Butler have all come before the justice committee to say that that Liberal government knew there would be costs well in excess of \$40 million for the cancellation, despite the fact that that Premier, that cabinet and all of that caucus have stood up in this House and told us one thing when they knew another was actually the truth. They knew as early as December 2012 that costs were far in excess of \$700 million. Yet, that Premier, in April of last year, came not only to this House but also to committee—under oath, I might add—and told us it was only \$40 million.

I listened to a long laundry list from the member from Trinity-Spadina, about all of the accomplishments of the New Democrats, and—Speaker, you're going to be interested—I've done a laundry list of the accomplishments of the Liberal Party and the NDP combined. This is what they have done together: a \$273-billion debt, a \$12-billion deficit, one million people out of work, a \$1.1-billion cancellation of a gas plant. And, together, they did what no government ever wanted to do, and that is put rural Ontario out of business and kill horses while they did it.

It was that party and that party who passed a budget, Speaker, and it is that party and that party who are going to be accountable.

It is this party, under the leadership of Tim Hudak, who is going to continue to stand up and get the answers we so desperately need, not only at the gas plant committee, but in this House.

That's why we expect this party, the NDP, to support this motion. Or it's time for them to actually come clean to the taxpayers and it's time for them to actually look at them and say this: Andrea Horwath and the NDP are more concerned about their own personal aspirations and their jobs than they are about the taxpayers of this province. Speaker, they should stand up, defend them and they should do the right thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener-Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: That's a tough act to follow, I must say. I just want to bring this so-called debate back to a little bit of reality. Let's be really clear: The leader of the official opposition knows—he knows absolutely—that his party's motion has no teeth and won't accomplish what he claims. Outside of this House, it will accomplish, namely, nothing. The motion itself is not a confidence motion. While I participated and took note of his press conference this morning, where he threw down the gauntlet to our leader and talked about confidence—this is not a confidence motion and they know it. That's why many of them are leaving as I speak.

That's why I want to spend some time, actually, today, to talk about the ineffectiveness of the official opposition. The PC caucus knows that their own motion isn't actionable, and in fact, the PC caucus knows full well

how not to get any action. Actually, that should be their theme song. They have spent every day since the last general election standing on their heads, shouting from the sidelines and ignoring the wishes of the people of this province, who sent us here to do a job. We have heard Ontarians loud and clear; they have not.

In October 2011, they spoke loudly when they sent a minority government here to Queen's Park. The people of this province wanted a minority government to form. They wanted us to figure it out. Since that day, the PC caucus and the leadership of the official opposition has been calling for an election, which, in my view and the view of the New Democratic Party, is completely disrespectful to the people of this province.

What the people of this province want is a government that delivers for them. Clearly, that wasn't something that they were experiencing during the McGuinty administration, and New Democrats have been doing that since we arrived here after the 2011 general election.

I understand that the PC caucus has actually been taking notice of what we've been doing. They have turned their view over here a little to the left, because we've been getting results. We know that they're concerned with those results, because they watched us win and steal and take and definitely advocate on behalf of the people of this province throughout the two budget sessions. We got results during those processes.

People in Ontario are taking notice of the results, and all of a sudden, they're talking about Andrea Horwath a lot and they're talking about the NDP and they're talking about our results. I think that that's because they're genuinely worried. They're two years into a term and they've accomplished nothing.

I understand where the members of the PC caucus are coming from, perhaps better than most, actually, because the reason you're training your guns on New Democrats is because we've been very successful. When we have essentially gone out to the people of this province and said, "In the 2012 budget, we were able to negotiate this," and in the last budget, unbelievable concessions on youth employment and home care—that translates well at the door, I have to say.

In particular, Ontarians in Kitchener-Waterloo, Windsor-Tecumseh and London West saw that there was only one party they could trust to get results for them. They rewarded New Democrats for the job we have been doing, and we are going to continue to deliver for them. They know that we are not here to play games. They know that. They know that we're not here to play games and make meaningless noise on the sidelines. We're not interested in taking our lead from the PCs, a party that seems utterly out of touch with the people of this province. The PCs can't even be trusted to be serious in this place, which is why we're debating this motion.

Do you know what we should be talking about in this House? We should be talking about the economy. We should be talking about strengthening health care. We should be talking about making workplace safety—

Applause.

Ms. Catherine Fife: —don't applaud, because the Liberals have failed on this front—a priority. We should be talking about the young man, Nick Lalonde, who fell to his death—23 years old—when you had the regulations and all the language to create fall prevention safety as a priority. You had it within your grasp and you did nothing. That's what we should be talking about in this House.

Certainly, there are a lot of people across the province who have said that the by-elections, actually, were kind of a job interview, if you will. When candidates go door to door, they go to that door with a set resumé. Our resumé was strong; your resumé had nothing on it. People like the fact that we are keeping the Liberals to account. It's shocking sometimes, actually, to hear the account.

1640

It's actually shocking, sometimes, to hear the PC caucus talk about how they're tough on the Liberals. Actually, I have a perfect example of how that's complete doublespeak from the PC Party—just this morning, the claim that the PCs are interested in getting to the bottom of the cost of the gas plant scandal. That's all they talk about: gas plant, gas plant. This very moment, the member from Welland, the honourable member to my right, introduced a motion in the Standing Committee on Public Accounts calling on the Auditor General to examine the money spent on determining whether or not that money was well spent. However, all the Liberal caucus members and all the PC members on the committee voted against the motion. The Liberal and PC coalition teamed up to stop the Auditor General from investigating, when we know that this Liberal government has a track record of low-balling the cost of energy and a long list of energy fiascos.

They talk about openness and transparency. When the Liberal members had a chance to vote for transparency, they did not do it, and when the PC caucus had a chance to do what they said they really wanted to do, they decided not to do it. I guess it was not politically expedient for them. Their leader has made a lot of noise, but he has shown yet again that he's stuck on the sidelines and his team can't get anything done. And I sense their frustration. The temperature in this place is rising on a regular basis because they are out of touch with what's actually going on in the province. It feels a little desperate.

While the PCs do little for the people of this province, New Democrats are getting results. We got results on the gas plant inquiry; we got results on worker safety—we're pushing that portfolio; the Financial Accountability Office—we will have credibility in a financial sense; forcing the government to invest in youth jobs; shortening home care wait times; and keeping the government accountable about watered-down chemotherapy drugs. The day will come when this government has to face the people of this province and explain the waste. We will stand up. We will say what we got for the people of this province.

Until that day, New Democrats will continue to fight for the people of this province. We will continue to bring the voices of people to this place, because that is what we were elected to do. We will continue to be respectful of this minority setting, this minority government.

For me, there's an opportunity here not only to point out the fact that you are spinning your wheels and that you are ineffective, but also point out the fact that people like the fact that we are holding you, the Liberal government, to account for the first time in 10 years. This is the way minority governments are supposed to work. Until that day, New Democrats will continue to get results.

It reminds me of the Tragically Hip. They're my favourite band, an iconic Canadian band. One of my favourite songs is called Wheat Kings. The best line in that song says "no one's interested in something you didn't do." This could be your theme song for the 40th Parliament in the province of Ontario. Feel free to use it; feel free to use it as you go forward into the next election. You wanted to talk about elections for the last two years, but you didn't want to talk about elections this morning in that media scrum. You wanted to talk about elections the day after you lost the last election, but now you're not so keen to talk about certain candidates within that context.

What we are doing each and every day in each committee is bringing the priorities of people to those committee sessions. We're not going to get tied up in the game-playing that has become the strategy and the plan of the PC Party. It hasn't been working for two years. I don't know why we're still in this House on this day, debating a motion that has literally nothing to do with the people of this province. It is not a confidence motion. It is not about confidence. For us, this is an opportunity to say to the people of the province that we are staying focused on the real priorities of the people of Ontario. We are not going to back down on that. I look forward to one day having a focused approach on jobs, on health care, on education and on the environment. That is what we should be doing in this House, and we're committed to doing that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'll just let everybody back in Peterborough know that it's a three-book speech today as opposed to a five-book speech, so that's quite all right.

First of all, I want to get on the record that, last Friday night, I got the opportunity to participate in three high school graduations in Peterborough: Adam Scott, Crestwood and my own high school, Kenner Collegiate. I just want to recognize the teachers, the administrative staff—and what a great crop of students. I tell everybody that the future is in good hands. When I visited those three high schools for their graduations last Friday night, all part of the Kawartha Pine Ridge public school board—a great school board doing great work on behalf of everybody in the community. So I just wanted to get that plug in for those three high schools this afternoon.

I'm very pleased, Mr. Speaker, to rise today on the motion that has been put forward by my good friend the

Leader of the Opposition. We all know that all parties on all sides of this Legislature have a great responsibility to make this Legislature work each and every day, but I suspect that's not what this motion is all about. Some might say we're playing a little bit of gamesmanship this afternoon.

When you look at the record, the truth is that we've come a long way as a province. Our government continually addresses important issues by investing in infrastructure, investing in people and supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate in the province of Ontario.

When I get the opportunity to talk to our municipal partners—I spent 18 years in municipal politics, as a councillor in the city of Peterborough, from 1985 to the fall of 2003, when I was given the great privilege of representing the wonderful people of Peterborough riding. We all know that investing in infrastructure is important to us all. I remember, oh, so well that famous AMO meeting in Ottawa in 1998. The then very august Premier of the province of Ontario, one Michael D. Harris, gave the keynote address to AMO. I was at the back; Brian Horton, who was our administrative director—we were all at the back. We got up and heard the speech—I took my notes—that said that downloading and the changes that were going to be brought about were going to be revenue-neutral. Well, you know what? I grew up in the south end of Peterborough. I went to St. John the Baptist Elementary School and Kenner Collegiate. So I did my quick math and figured out that it wasn't going to be revenue-neutral.

Interjection: That dog doesn't hunt.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Yes, that's an old south-end Peterborough saying: "That dog doesn't hunt."

That decision, of course, created a deep hole across the province of Ontario. As I remind my friends, 43% of all the roads and bridges were downloaded in eastern Ontario, so we're working collectively, I might add, to get out of that.

Let me address Highway 407. That's a great one. Picture the Walmart man—we've all seen the Walmart commercial—who keeps rolling back the prices. Let's start—\$9 billion to \$8 billion to \$7 billion to \$6 billion to \$5 billion to \$4 billion. The Walmart man has a deal: \$3 billion that was sold off on an asset that was worth \$9 billion. The Walmart man was great that day. So \$9 billion rolled back to \$3 billion—a fire sale a few days before the June 3 provincial election. Mr. Speaker, I was a candidate in that election, so I know this all very well. Over that period of time, we've literally lost billions of dollars in revenue. But the Tory lawyers, in 1999—a very clever, very sharp group of lawyers—because when we took them to court to see if we could break the deal in terms of toll charges, we couldn't do it because it was an ironclad agreement for 99 years.

Mr. Speaker, people don't know this, but there are two Ontario Places in the world. There's one here in Toronto, and there's one in Madrid, Spain. The other Ontario Place—because they own the 407, those are the folks

who, every day, get the cheques from here in Ontario. They're drinking those very fancy drinks—I don't know about them in Peterborough—the ones with the little umbrellas, and they just down them each and every day because they're getting their cash flow from Ontario. Two Ontario Places: one in Toronto and one in Madrid, Spain. I recommend that people go and visit when they get the opportunity.

So we've seen that movie before, with all the down-loading.

Since 2003, our government has invested some \$85 billion in public infrastructure projects—very important. More specifically, our government has invested in critical infrastructure for rural municipalities—our recent announcement, a \$100-million program.

I want to help the member from Nipissing. The other day, he gave me a wonderful project, and as I do with all my good friends opposite—I always make the commitment to try to help them out. I'm a good guy from Peterborough; everybody in Peterborough are good folks. So we're going to try to help everybody out with that infrastructure.

1650

Member from Nipissing, I hope to be with you when we cut that ribbon in the not-too-distant future. It's a good project.

Interjection.

Hon. Jeff Leal: There we go.

So what does this mean, our investment for residents in rural Ontario? It means 60 new schools for our children to learn in. It means four new hospitals and 70 family health teams that are taking care of—Mr. Speaker, what's the number?—458,000 rural residents, now to have access to primary care.

In terms of road-building, it means 6,700 kilometres of new roads. I know the opposition are very good at geography—that's building a road from Ontario to Alaska so that Sarah Palin doesn't have to look at Russia; so she can see Toronto. That's a very important thing to do. It means building more than 800 bridges so that people and businesses in rural Ontario can get to their destinations quickly and safely.

Our government—your government—understands how important infrastructure is to rural Ontario, and in the city, of course, my friend from Etobicoke—Lakeshore understands that it's subways, buses and streetcars. You name it; we can do it.

But in rural Ontario, the transit system is roads and bridges, so as part of our 2013 budget, our government dedicated \$100 million for critical infrastructure in rural and northern communities. It's a great program. The member from Nipissing knows all about it.

This year, funding will go towards 20 new projects totalling \$25 million—these are projects that are now approved based on their application to the MIII initiative of last year; providing \$4 million in capacity funding for 203 municipalities in asset management planning; and \$71 million in new infrastructure funding. Applications are now open. I tell my friends on all sides: Get those

applications in, because if they get an application in, we can start the process for approval, and then all of us together can be announcing good projects in ridings.

I heard loud and clear that we need stable, predictable funding, so we're working on that, along with my colleague the Honourable Glen Murray. We had consultations across the province. We met with over 500 municipal leaders who stressed to us the importance of having a consistent source of funding. It's very important, Mr. Speaker. You're a former municipal politician; you know what that's all about. That's why we're consulting widely to bring in, hopefully, a permanent program in the 2014 budget, which I know will be approved on all sides of this House. We're looking forward to that day.

The other thing I want to talk about briefly is that our government is working on health links to make sure that rural Ontarians receive the right care at the right time in the right place—very important. One of the ways we're doing this is through health links. Community health links represent a new way of thinking about health care delivery, about bringing together primary care, hospital care, home care, community, long-term-care providers, to ensure that high-needs patients aren't falling through the cracks.

This is an important statistic, and I want to get it on the record today. It's important to understand that in Ontario, the top 5% of highest-need patients, including seniors with multiple complex conditions or those suffering from mental health or addictions, account for two thirds of our health care budget. In many cases, this cost is because of duplication in services they receive and the frequent usage of these services. Health links is about turning the system around so that it's more important and responsive to patient needs. It's about breaking down silos.

Last week, I was in the wonderful community of Napanee. I always like to be travelling in eastern Ontario. I had the opportunity to be with my good friend the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. You want to talk about small businesses? I had the opportunity to see Vincent, and Vincent is a great small business owner. He has the dry-cleaning, he has the taxicab service and he has the coin laundry. I said to Mr. Yakabuski, "You don't need Costco when you have someone like Vincent providing those great services in Renfrew." So I was in Napanee. It was a great day. I talked about the Salmon River Health Link. Our government is providing that community with \$60,000 to help plan and establish the business plan for their health link, and of course, in Ontario, we're setting up 37 of these right across our great province.

That's incredible progress, and as Minister of Rural Affairs, I'm very proud to say that these health links are right in the heart of rural Ontario and so important to the well-being of this province. The kind of health care links provide is best suited in rural Ontario to match their needs.

In rural Ontario, Mr. Speaker, as you well know—Bill Davis, a great Premier from 1971 to the fall of 1984,

always used to say that Ontario was still a province of small towns with big dreams, and I've always believed that. In rural Ontario, there's a sense of community. Organizations work closely together. People know each other, like the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke: He knows his neighbours and gets along with them very well. He knows what their needs are. That's so important in rural Ontario and, of course, we take care of each other.

This exciting program is just one of many under way across the province that seek to transform our health care system so it's more responsive to patients, and, of course, the number one priority, accountable to taxpayers. As a government, we know we must listen to the concerns of Ontarians, and that's exactly what we've been doing.

It's a three-book speech, not a five-book speech, so I've got to get to my conclusion.

To conclude, I'd like to recognize the progress our government has made—I just got the note that I'm getting the hook pulled on me. We focused on big things: health care, infrastructure and education. Going forward, our main priority will be to invest in people, invest in infrastructure and support a dynamic and innovative business climate. We believe there's only one Ontario, and each and every one of us is stronger when we all work together.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I must tell you, it's going to be awfully difficult to follow such an eloquent speech from our friend across the aisle. He is right: There is one Ontario. Sadly, that Ontario is being led by a government at this particular moment that has not been truthful at all to the people of Ontario.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: "Accurate"; you can't say "truthful."

Mr. Victor Fedeli: They have not been factual. I was going to say "corrupt," actually. I can go as far as that.

For purely political reasons, we saw these gas plants cancelled. First we saw the gas plant in Oakville cancelled, followed by the gas plant in Mississauga. Now, you've got to remember that the gas plant in Mississauga was cancelled only days before the election.

We have worked very hard—our entire party has worked diligently—going through 150,000 documents to get to the truth. Why? Because we could not get the truth from the Liberal Party. They would not tell Ontario how much they had spent to cancel these gas plants, so we dug. You will recall, of course, that we needed the help of the Auditor General, the privacy commissioner and the OPP. What other scandal in Ontario has had that breadth and that depth of corruption and cost \$1.1 billion? This is an unbelievable, unprecedented scandal in Ontario.

The sad part of it as well is that the third party have been joining in on this government—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Yes, sir?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You've been warned.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker.

So here we are with a government that has spent \$1.1 billion to cancel two gas plants to save five seats—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Final warning: If there are any more personal comments directed at this chair, the member will be removed.

Continue.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate that.

So let's just review some of the things that actually did happen.

We know that documents were concealed from the public. It started on day one, when the member from Cambridge asked a very, very simple question at the estimates committee: How much did it cost to cancel the two gas plants? The Liberal Party began the scurrying and the dance that began to conceal all these facts from us. Right away, we knew that something was wrong. We knew that something was not going to be right about this.

We never got the answer, so we had a contempt motion and began to get documents, but they even misled us about the documents. We got 36,000 documents, and 30 people on that side stood up and said, "You have all the documents." Two weeks later, we had 20,000 more documents given to us. In later testimony, we learned from the Ontario Power Authority that they were directed by the staff of the Ministry of Energy to conceal those 20,000 documents from us, hoping that we'd never figure out that they were missing. But we did know that they were missing. This tells you the breadth and the depth of this scandal that faced us.

1700

Then we, through the committee, got to deleted documents. We actually coaxed out of somebody that they had deleted their documents, then destroyed the deleted documents and then destroyed the files so that we would never get to the truth of that. This is why the privacy commissioner had to be brought in. This is why the Ontario Provincial Police are still, to this minute, investigating this.

Then we found, as nefarious as we already thought it was, that the kingpin, Don Guy, and Dave Gene tried to influence the very Speaker's chair, to make sure that we never got to the truth. The only other thought I could share, Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I've been very lenient with the "not the truth" and some of the things you've said. I would suggest that you don't go down that road again, and you will withdraw that last comment.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I withdraw. Thank you, Speaker.

Let me just end my last couple of seconds here with the 2012 budget. Remember that the third party signed on and became the enablers of the Liberal government by backing that budget. Do you realize that the deal to send this gas plant down to Napanee, which added \$513 mil-

lion to this whole scandal, would never have happened had the enablers not signed on to the budget deal? We would not have been there. The third party is absolutely complicit in this.

Speaker, I stand beside our leader, Tim Hudak, in his motion, and I thank you for the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Jonah Schein: It's always an honour to stand up and speak on behalf of my constituents of Davenport. Today, I'm speaking to the Conservatives' opposition day motion. Unfortunately, I'm afraid this is a motion that will do little to help the people of my community or people anywhere in this province, because this motion is more political posturing, and it's more political posturing by a party that seems to have run out of good ideas a long time ago.

The topic of today's motion is whether Ontarians trust this Premier and this Liberal government. I think that's an important discussion, and I think the answer is fairly obvious. Speaker, I believe that in many ways and for many reasons the people of this province do not trust this government. I've talked about this before. The scandals, the mismanagement, the cover-ups: They erode the trust in our democracy; they alienate people across this province. But so do the kind of political games that the opposition is engaged in today, these self-serving theatrics.

This opposition day motion is a gimmick. It's self-serving. It's a gesture that does nothing to benefit the people of this province. Speaker, if you look at the standing orders, order 43(b)(vi), it's clear that this opposition day motion "shall not be a motion of want of confidence in the government." To break that down into regular language so that everyone at home can understand that, all that means is that this is not a confidence motion. It's not going to force an election in this province. This motion is non-binding. It does nothing to hold this government to account. It does nothing. It has little effect on what happens in this House now or in the future.

This motion is more of the same from a party that remains more interested in making noise on the sidelines than on delivering for the people who they're supposed to represent here. Speaker, we've seen this before. The official opposition plays games in this House. Last month, the PCs demanded that the Liberals repay \$1.1 billion lost in the gas plant scandal, but then they couldn't even show up in the House to vote for it on a Thursday afternoon. Members went off to play hockey and they left their constituents without a voice in this House.

This summer we saw the Conservative Party, we saw members make a big deal about demanding answers on the gas plant scandal, but then they voted to shut down hearings for the month of August so they could take an extended vacation. So while the PCs like to thump their chests and get excited and shout from the sidelines, they often follow up with little or no concrete action. They're all bark and no bite.

This motion here today—it's plain and simple—is more of the same that we've seen, and quite frankly,

more of the same is wearing people down. We know that our province does face huge challenges. Thousands of people are out of work. Thousands more cannot get good, meaningful work. The cost of living continues to go up in this province and our social safety net is frayed and broken, and we hear yet again this morning from the Environment Commissioner that this government continues to fail our province in protecting our natural environment.

Instead of facing these challenges, both the Conservatives and the Liberal government continue to play self-serving games in this House. Whether it's the power plant fiasco or the bill to support construction giant EllisDon or this pointless motion that is before us today, it's clear to all those who are paying attention at home and paying attention around the province that these two parties continue to put their own political interests first. That is disheartening to people across this province. Today's motion highlights the fact that people across Ontario have lost trust in this government, and I think, as I said before, that is quite obvious. We don't need a motion from the Conservatives to tell us that.

I think it's also true that people across this province have lost faith in government, period, and that's something that both you the Tories and the Liberals can take credit for. You've done it. You've successfully created so many crises in all parts of our government that it's hard for people to keep the faith.

Mike Harris, and now Tim Hudak, and all the neo-con rhetoric and the legacy of the Conservative cuts from the 1990s continue to hurt people in this province. They continue to hurt our public services and institutions and damage our collective faith in government.

In the 1990s, it was the Conservative cuts and their deregulation and lack of oversight that led to poisoned water in Walkerton. When that happens, people die, and people in this province lose faith in government.

The Conservatives' agenda of tax cuts for the rich and downloading costs and problems to everyday people leaves people poor. It has left people hungry, it has left people homeless, and people have died on the streets of this city. This brings people to lose faith in our government.

I'm sorry that the Liberals have been no better. While the Liberals are great at making people in this province think and believe they are going to do good things, they can't help but disappoint. People get excited when they see this government make announcements, only to be disappointed.

We see that this government likes to stand up and talk about how they're going to be the transit government, the transit Premier, the social justice Premier, the social justice government. All the headlines follow them along. People get excited. They say, "Finally, after 10 years, we believe this government is actually going to do something when it comes to transit." Then they retreat and do nothing.

People in my community met for years to talk about poverty reduction and were dragged from meeting to meeting and consultation to consultation. Nothing hap-

pened. This government releases report after report. They have panel after panel, and do nothing. People get excited by government announcements, and they feel proud when the government claims that our province is a leader. It's only later that they find out that behind closed doors this government cuts deals with their friends that leave us further behind.

Several times a week I hear this Liberal side boast that they spend the least of any province in the country. Congratulations. You invest less in our communities, less in our families, less in our children than any province across this country. Congratulations. You must be proud.

The Liberals continue to pursue their blind faith in deregulation and privatization, and it leaves them lurching from one scandal to the next. Without investments and proper oversight, who can be surprised that we don't have enough guards in our jails and that people die? The Conservatives scream to cut deeper, and all along, the people of this province lose faith in government.

Cancer patients in this province are given the wrong dose of chemotherapy, and people die. And the Conservatives yell about cutting more red tape. People lose faith in their government.

There is no regulation. There is no oversight of our child care centres, and so this summer we see kids die in our child care centres in Ontario. So people in this province lose faith in government.

1710

This government chronically underfunds our ministries. It crushes their ability to enforce the laws of the land, so our environment suffers and the species of this province die. It's miraculous that people even want to believe in their political leaders anymore. But it's clear that this government has exhausted all credibility. I think the people do want to believe in their governments. They want to believe that their governments are protecting their health, protecting their children and their environment. They don't trust this government or this Premier to deliver for them anymore.

It's the NDP that has done the hard work to earn people's trust, to hold this government to account for their mismanagement of this province and for the cancelling of Oakville and Mississauga gas plants. It's the NDP who understands that people of this province want to see real work being done in this Legislature and that they want to trust their government, and that if the government deserves that trust, they need to earn it.

Since the last election, our team, under Andrea Horwath's leadership, has taken a thoughtful and serious approach to the issues and the debate in this House, and we focused on delivering results for the people who elected us. We're not here to play games or to make noise on the sidelines. To be honest, why would we take our lead from a party that seems utterly out of touch with most Ontarians?

When I go out in my community in Davenport, the only people, the only party that's trusted less than the Liberal government of Ontario is the PC Party of

Ontario. The motion that they've asked us to debate today will do nothing to advance the interests of the people of Davenport. It will do nothing to advance the interests of people across this province.

We have a very different approach. We have a different leader. We'll continue to follow her lead, to work hard for Ontarians in the months ahead to make these positive changes. That's our plan. This party will huff and puff; I don't think they'll blow anything down except maybe themselves. We're going to do things differently here. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to respond to our leader's opposition day motion. Really, I could thematically call this opposition day motion the question of trust. In fact, it's a very short time that I have. I look at it this way: First of all, if a person pulls the wool over your eyes, the first time, shame on them; the second time, we've caught on to the gimmicks that the government—they say one thing and do another.

I'm so disappointed because the gas plant typifies what happens. During an election, they'll say one thing, and after, do another. In this case here, they knew they made a mistake. Our leader told them that they had made a mistake on the gas plant locations, and for mean-spirited means and political outcomes, they cancelled the plant.

Just recently in my riding of Durham, they cancelled the new-build nuclear, as well as rendered the whole industry of nuclear energy in a very vulnerable state—uncertainty for investors and those people interested in going forward to build a strong, reliable production of energy sector in Ontario. My riding of Durham is just that sector, and it's caused uncertainty right from the regional chairman to the president of the university and to the workers in my community.

I have quotes here today, but I haven't been given enough time to actually put them on the table.

Bob Malcolmson, from the board of trade and the chamber of commerce for the Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce, said it was shameful. That's the word he used, so that's a pretty powerful word. The regional chairman said that this is undermining opportunities for employment in the community of Durham, and in fact affecting the tax base. The mayor of Clarington, whom I spoke with last week, was not even informed of the cancellation. The Premier sat beside him a week before at the luncheon and never mentioned it.

It's a shameful disregard for the leaders in our community and for the people of Ontario, and I have come to the conclusion that enough is enough. They can't be trusted. This government should be held to account. I certainly would want other people to talk to the issues as it affects their riding.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: There are only a couple of comments that I have to make.

Firstly, since I've arrived here, the Liberals have always tried to spread the blame for taking those gas plants down and the huge costs involved in that. But the mistake wasn't taking them down; the mistake clearly was putting them up. There's only one group here that put them up, and that was the Liberals.

The problem I see with this is that if you don't learn from your mistakes, you're bound to make them again. I think that's exactly what's happening here. If they don't show any remorse, if they don't understand what has happened, then they're going to do it again, and that's a very costly bit of business for the taxpayers of Ontario.

To the NDP: Since I've been here, you've criticized the Liberals on every occasion. You've criticized them over the gas plants. You've criticized them over their spending in other areas. But in this situation, you are supporting them, which in effect means you're condoning what they've done. There again, for the residents of Ontario, that's not the best thing to do. You certainly cannot be condoning the actions of these people when you know how bad it is. I know you know how bad it is because you criticize them every single day.

Something has to happen here. You've got to understand that if we don't correct what has gone on, it will happen again.

Finally, to the Premier, what I would like to say is that the only thing between you and your government and that door is the shameful support of the NDP.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm very pleased to join this debate this afternoon, because at the end of the day, this motion reads specifically, "It is the opinion of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that Ontarians no longer trust the Premier and the Liberal government." Speaker, there are so many examples of how people have lost trust in this government—over and above the gas plants; let's start there.

Just last week, there was a representative from OPA there testifying that there were four choices before Napanee that were delivered to the government for consideration. For whatever reason, they chose to absolutely ignore the recommendations of the OPA and go with the fifth choice, Napanee. It's actually a travesty because it's adding nothing but expense to the taxpayers. This is why people don't trust the Premier or their Liberal government.

As I spoke about in the House a few weeks ago, we had a family of seven in the riding of Huron-Bruce who couldn't afford their hydro bills, and electricity was cut off. They are blaming the Liberals' mismanaged energy scheme for that very reason. It is an absolute travesty that people and agencies that support these people are running out of dollars.

Just today alone, I was meeting with CFIB, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, as well as the home builders. There were some commonalities there. They all agree that there's only one pocket to draw from, and it doesn't matter whether it's the added tax that

they've introduced through the WSIB rates; it doesn't matter whether it's the burden of red tape and escalating fees to do business in the province of Ontario. Everybody from different corners is recognizing that people just don't have the dollars anymore.

Then, where do we start with their failed green energy scheme? People across this province are totally devastated by this mismanagement. I think it's pretty rich: I hope people realize that when the Premier and the energy minister say, "We're going to be listening to municipalities now with regard to the placement of industrial wind turbines," the reality is that they've got all the projects they need to realize 10,700 megawatts of power. They're not going to be looking for any new projects to come forward. So the fact that they're stating that they're going to start listening to municipalities on a go-forward basis is an absolute joke.

Then you marry that with the fact, which was brought to my attention by my astute seatmate, that one of the members of the Liberal caucus actually said today during debate—and this gentleman had his seat saved by the relocation of the Mississauga gas plant—that municipalities should have a say in where projects go. It begs the question of why what's good for one goose isn't good for the other gander. Municipalities across the province should have a say in where power projects go.

1720

I want to draw to your attention, in the minutes that I have here, that there was a document released at windpowergrab.wordpress.com. I share these numbers and these stats as a salute to the poor people who are being inundated with projects that are unwanted in their communities: Algoma, 609; Bruce, 827; Chatham-Kent, 629; Cochrane, 15; Dufferin, 246; Durham, 16; Elgin, 97; Essex, 312; Frontenac, 86; Grey Highlands, 156; Haldimand, 216; Huron, 521; Kawartha Lakes, 18; Lambton, 363; Lanark, 6; Leeds-Grenville, 6; Lennox, 78; Manitoulin, 204; Middlesex, 228; Niagara, 64; Nipissing, 48; Norfolk, 41; Northumberland, 30; Ottawa, 8; Oxford, 28; Parry Sound, 299; Peel, 5; Perth, 31; Peterborough, 3; Prescott, 15; Prince Edward, 195; Rainy River, 10; Renfrew, 100; Simcoe, 17; Stormont, 24; Sudbury, 1; Thunder Bay, 537; Timiskaming, 200; Toronto, 10—what happened to that one?—Waterloo, 10; Wellington, 73; York, 151.

Every single county that I just read off is home to unwilling host communities, yet as they exercise their voice, the Liberal government chooses to absolutely ignore them—except for Toronto, the Leslie Spit. What happened there? There's a community that spoke up again, and, son of a gun, they were listened to, and that project has gone off the rails.

When we talk about trust, we have to realize that this government has lost its moral compass, and we need a change in government. Tim Hudak and the PC Party will bring Ontario back to prosperity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I wasn't going to join in this debate. I didn't want to give it any credibility. I believe

it's a hoax, but my good friend from Etobicoke–Lakeshore threw down the gauntlet, and I feel like I have to respond, because I have a lot of respect for the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I really do; I respect him as a person. But he's suggesting to the House that this is the NDP's opportunity to say that we don't have respect for the government, that they have no integrity, and we want to bring them down.

We don't need this pretend motion to say that. We do it on the New Democratic Party side every day in this House. Every question period, every debate, we're talking about the Liberals and the lack of respect that we have for some of their policies.

You can stand there and you can suggest that we have to support you. If you want to pretend—the great pretender party—that this is about integrity, then let's be honest with the people of Ontario: This is not a non-confidence motion. They're not going to rise on their integrity and say, "Yes, there's a confidence motion"—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Oxford.

Mr. Percy Hatfield:—"it's all smoke and mirrors."

Let's not pretend, for the people of Ontario, that this motion has any credibility whatsoever. It has none; absolutely none.

I came here to take part in meaningful debate. Sometimes I believe I'm off in Disneyland somewhere. You guys, when you stand up and you say to the people of Ontario, "This is real meaningful stuff"—what was it that Mr. Hudak said? This is the only tool, or the best tool that we have at our disposal?

Well, talk about tools. This is not a tool at all. This is a pretend motion. They say, "Maybe we'll get a headline. Maybe we'll take an opportunity to practise some of our lines for the next election." But nobody but the PC caucus is taking this motion seriously. Nobody in Ontario is taking this motion seriously.

If they had any chance of success, if I thought the members opposite were going to take it seriously and bring in a motion of confidence that we could seriously have a debate on—seriously have a debate on and take a vote on, it would be meaningful. What you have done is sit there on your hands and pretend to the people of Ontario that this means something. It means nothing. Your party means nothing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker. That was quite a speech. I enjoyed that. I like to see emotion in the NDP, Speaker. I wish they had shown that same emotion when they helped kill the horse industry a couple of years ago.

They speak about all they got with this Liberal government. What they got was 9,000 or 10,000 people out of work, and that's a shame, because they wouldn't stand up for that industry. They went and voted with this Liberal government. We could have ended it right there, but no, you put your heads in the sand, you sat on your hands and you let that industry go down the tubes.

The last line in this motion says, "Therefore, it is the opinion of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that Ontarians no longer trust the Premier and the Liberal government." That's what this is all about. It's called trust. You people keep propping them up all the time; therefore, you must trust this government. That's what it says.

I had the opportunity, when I was a small child, to show horses. I showed at the royal winter fair a couple of times, and I showed at the CNE a couple of times. I built a bond with that horse, and one thing you didn't do with a horse is fool around with it, like try to trip it or whatever else, because that horse wouldn't trust you. That's exactly what's going on here. You cannot kick the legs from underneath an industry like these people and those people over there did and expect them to trust them again. That's what it's about. We do not trust them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, in the remaining minutes here, I'm pleased to join this debate and talk on behalf of the citizens of Cambridge and North Dumfries. I think as well of the voices of people in the ridings that are represented by members of the New Democrats, because I know that we visit those ridings. I hear the concerns that are expressed in my riding as well, that they simply do not trust this government.

I have sat here and listened to debate in this House already, and to hear the NDP denigrate the democratic process by calling this a pretend motion is an insult to this Legislative Assembly. The reality here is that this Legislature has an ability to express an opinion. In the opinion of the House, do we trust this government, yes or no? That's what this is about. I know that the members on this side of the Legislature, in the PC caucus, do not trust this government. I'm waiting to see what opinion the NDP has, if they really trust this government or if they don't. I want to see what they say. I want to see them stand up in their seats and say that they actually support this government.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the leader of the third party ask questions this morning in the Legislature. The first question: "Can the Premier explain why, then, Ontario ranks ninth out of 10 provinces when it comes to productivity growth?"

The answer to that question is because the NDP enables them.

The second question: "Since the Liberals were first elected, Ontario has lost 300,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs, and despite promise after promise, those good jobs have not come back.

"Today, 110 women and men who work at the Kellogg plant in London have learned that they'll be losing their jobs come January.

"Is the Premier admitting that the government's policy of no-strings-attached giveaways hasn't been working?"

The answer, Mr. Speaker, is maybe, but it will continue so long as the NDP enables them.

1730

The third question, Mr. Speaker: "Over the last 10 years of Liberal government, 300,000 good manufactur-

ing jobs have disappeared. Our province has the highest electricity rates in the country, the lowest productivity growth and an unemployment rate that is above the national average. The Premier still insists the plan is working while at the same time her actions seem to suggest something different.

“When are people like the women and men losing jobs in London going to see some real action from the Liberal government?”

The answer is, not until the NDP stops enabling them.

We have to have a process in this Legislature to express the opinion of this Legislature and whether we continue to have trust in this government. Each and every day, I stand in this Legislature on behalf of my constituents. I’m representing their concerns because they’re emailing. They’re saying \$1.1 billion were lost on politically motivated decisions to save some seats in the last election. They weren’t saving NDP seats; they weren’t saving Conservative seats; they were saving Liberal seats. And the past has a habit of repeating itself. In the next election, how much more money are they going to spend to save yet another Liberal seat? And the NDP, by simply continuing to prop them up, are waiting for that to happen yet again.

So there are certain questions that the NDP have to ask. Do they want an election or not? They should be standing in this Legislature and answering that question. Do they want and do they think that this is a corrupt government? Yes or no? We have not understood where the NDP stands on these critical questions, and they can say all they want—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would ask the member from Cambridge to withdraw the one comment he made—the word.

Mr. Rob Leone: Withdrawn, Mr. Speaker.

They say that the PCs are bad, but the Liberals are worse—or they’re not sure which is worse. But, you know what, Mr. Speaker? At the end of the day, it’s not about what I think or what the NDP think; it’s about what the people of Ontario think. What they’re craving for is an opportunity to have their voice heard on this matter: whether or not they have trust in this government, whether or not they have confidence in their ability to move forward.

The only way we’re going to be able to do that is to express our collective opinion in this Legislature. And they’re going to hide behind the fact that we can’t take down this government? But look at the pressure that we could put on this government if all of us in the opposition could finally have our say on whether or not we trust this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Second call for further debate. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakubuski: It’s my pleasure to join the motion, the last—looks like I might be the last one of the official opposition today.

I want to start, obviously, by stating that we’re going to support this motion. This motion is about trust. It is about whether or not this government has lost the trust of

the members of this Legislature, and have they lost the trust of the people of Ontario.

I say to my friend from Windsor–Tecumseh: No, he’s right; this is not a confidence motion, because we can’t bring a confidence motion unless the government agrees to have a confidence motion. But if we as a collective body of legislators, I say to the member from Davenport—who agreed with us that he has no trust, that there’s no trust left in this government, and that the people of Ontario do not believe in this government and do not trust it. But if we do not, as a collective body, if we do not, as the opposition, stand in our place and say, “We agree with this motion”—there is nothing in this motion that the NDP can possibly disagree with. There is not a line in this motion. There is not a line in—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Maybe the member would like to go through me? Thanks.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I most certainly will, Speaker.

There is not a line in this motion that the third party can disagree with. My point is this, Speaker: If the members of the New Democrats—who have propped this government up through crisis after crisis and have ensured that more damage would be done to the people of Ontario—if they support this motion, there will be at least some moral obligation on the part of the government to recognize that members of this assembly, in the majority, have lost faith, do not have trust in this government. If we, as the majority, make that statement crystal clear to this government—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The next person who wants to play Ringo might have a problem with me.

Continue.

Mr. John Yakubuski: If we make it crystal clear that the members of this assembly, as a body, as the majority, say to this government: “We represent the people of Ontario. We believe absolutely that they no longer trust you. We can prove that what we say in this motion is absolutely true, that you have cost \$1.1 billion with your decisions to cancel gas plants, that the Premier is responsible for that”—and that the decision to cancel them was made at the 11th hour in the 2011 election to save Liberal seats. That has been verified by your former Minister of Finance Dwight Duncan.

So I say to the members of the third party that there’s one question you have to ask: Do you agree with what is written in this motion? Absolutely, because you say it over and over and over again in this House. You have an opportunity, in a few minutes, to stand in your place and say, “Yes, we represent people all across this province, and we are going to tell this government, as the opposition, that the people of Ontario have lost trust in you.” If we are successful today, then this government will be morally obliged, in my opinion, to bring a motion of confidence in the near future to this House and let this body determine whether or not they should continue to govern in the province of Ontario.

That is my ask of the third party. It is not a gimmick. It is not fun and games. Do you believe that the people of Ontario trust this government? I say, emphatically, no.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Seeing none, Mr. Hudak has moved opposition day number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I've heard a no.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

I believe the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1738 to 1748.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Hudak has moved opposition day number 2. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Holyday, Douglas C.

Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonell, Jim
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia

Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic

Dickson, Joe
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fraser, John
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwintar, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
McMeekin, Ted

McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 35; the nays are 45.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The designated business for this afternoon having been completed, this House is adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1751.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Samia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
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Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakubski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Niagara Falls	

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Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Continued from back cover

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Registered Human Resources Professionals Act, 2013, Bill 32, Mr. Dhillon, Mr. Prue, Mrs. Elliott / Loi de 2013 sur les professionnels en ressources humaines inscrits, projet de loi 32, M. Dhillon, M. Prue, Mme Elliott	
Third reading agreed to	4268
Correction of record	
Mr. Bill Walker	4268

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

4-H	
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	4268
Shine the Light on Woman Abuse campaign	
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	4268
Carefirst One-Stop Multi-Services Centre	
Ms. Soo Wong	4269
Ontario Drug Benefit Program	
Mr. Jeff Yurek	4269
Northern Ontario development	
Mr. Percy Hatfield	4269
Youth employment	
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	4270
Remembrance Day	
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	4270
Taste of Streetsville	
Mr. Bob Delaney	4270
Take Our Kids to Work Day	
Ms. Sylvia Jones	4270

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Government Agencies	
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	4271
Debate adjourned	4271

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act (Permanent Partial Disability Supplements), 2013, Bill 128, Mr. Berardinetti / Loi de 2013 modifiant la Loi sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail (supplément pour	
---	--

invalidité partielle à caractère permanent), projet de loi 128, M. Berardinetti	
First reading agreed to	4271
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	4271

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Aboriginal veterans	
Hon. David Zimmer	4271
Crime Prevention Week / Semaine de la prévention du crime	
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	4272
Medical Radiation Sciences Week	
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4273
Aboriginal veterans	
Mr. Norm Miller	4273
Crime Prevention Week	
Mr. Steve Clark	4274
Medical Radiation Sciences Week	
Mrs. Christine Elliott	4274
Aboriginal veterans	
Ms. Sarah Campbell	4274
Crime Prevention Week	
Ms. Peggy Sattler	4275
Medical Radiation Sciences Week	
Mme France Gélinas	4275

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Darlington nuclear generating station	
Mr. John O'Toole	4275
Taxation	
Ms. Sarah Campbell	4276
Air quality	
Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette	4276
All-terrain vehicles	
Mr. Michael Mantha	4276
Long-term care	
Mr. Jim McDonnell	4276
Long-term care	
Mme France Gélinas	4277
Fishing regulations	
Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette	4277
Minimum wage	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	4277
Wind turbines	
Mr. Victor Fedeli	4277
Government services	
Mr. Michael Mantha	4278

Air quality

Mr. John O'Toole	4278
------------------------	------

Home care

Mme France G�linas.....	4278
-------------------------	------

Lyme disease

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson.....	4278
---------------------------	------

OPPOSITION DAY / JOUR DE L'OPPOSITION**Power plants**

Mr. Tim Hudak	4279
Mr. Rosario Marchese	4279
Mr. Bob Delaney	4281
Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	4283
Ms. Catherine Fife	4283
Hon. Jeff Leal	4285
Mr. Victor Fedeli	4287
Mr. Jonah Schein	4288
Mr. John O'Toole	4289
Mr. Douglas C. Holyday.....	4289
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson.....	4290
Mr. Percy Hatfield	4290
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	4291
Mr. Rob Leone.....	4291
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	4292
Motion negatived.....	4293

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 6 November 2013 / Mercredi 6 novembre 2013

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2013, Bill 122, Mrs. Sandals / Loi de 2013 sur la négociation collective dans les conseils scolaires, projet de loi 122, Mme Sandals

Mr. Rob Leone	4247
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	4254
Hon. Liz Sandals	4255
Mr. Rob E. Milligan	4255
Ms. Peggy Sattler	4255
Mr. Rob Leone	4255
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	4256

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Monte McNaughton	4256
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4256
Mr. Todd Smith	4256
Ms. Catherine Fife	4256
Hon. Jeff Leal	4256
Mr. Rod Jackson	4256
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	4256
Hon. Michael Chan	4256
Ms. Sylvia Jones	4256
Hon. Reza Moridi	4256
Ms. Laurie Scott	4256
L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur	4256
Mr. Garfield Dunlop	4257
Ms. Peggy Sattler	4257
Mr. Mike Colle	4257
Mr. John O'Toole	4257
Mr. Jim McDonnell	4257
Mr. Monte McNaughton	4257

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Government accountability

Mr. Tim Hudak	4257
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4257

Government accountability

Mr. Tim Hudak	4258
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4258

Manufacturing jobs

Ms. Andrea Horwath	4259
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4259

Nuclear energy

Ms. Andrea Horwath	4260
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4260
Hon. John Milloy	4260
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	4260

Power plants

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	4261
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4261
Hon. John Milloy	4261

Cancer treatment

Mr. Percy Hatfield	4261
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4261

Youth employment

Ms. Mitzie Hunter	4262
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	4262

Pan Am Games

Mr. Rod Jackson	4262
Hon. Michael Chan	4263

Security at correctional facilities

Ms. Peggy Sattler	4263
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	4263

Municipal development

Mr. John Fraser	4264
Hon. Linda Jeffrey	4264

Cancer treatment

Mr. Ted Chudleigh	4264
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4264

Ontario Northland Transportation Commission

Mr. John Vanthof	4265
Hon. Michael Gravelle	4265

Aboriginal affairs

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	4266
Hon. David Zimmer	4266

Pension plans

Mrs. Julia Munro	4266
Hon. Charles Sousa	4266

Agri-food industry

Mr. John Vanthof	4267
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4267

Special report, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	4267
-------------------------------------	------

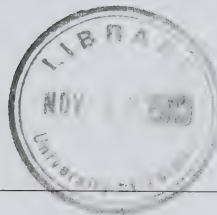
Visitors

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	4267
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	4267

Continued on inside back cover

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Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 7 November 2013

Jeudi 7 novembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 7 November 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 7 novembre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 6, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario's school system / *Projet de loi 122, Loi concernant la négociation collective dans le système scolaire de l'Ontario.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am honoured to stand in this assembly on behalf of my constituents in London West today to deliver my inaugural speech. I think I'm the last of the gang of five, as I've heard some people refer to us—affectionately, of course.

I want to begin by thanking the people of London West for the trust they have placed in me and their willingness to empower me as their voice. It's an enormous responsibility and one that I take very seriously. I also want to thank the hundreds of volunteers who worked so hard on my behalf, who spent countless hours knocking on doors, putting up signs, distributing leaflets and talking to voters on the phone. Special thanks to my NDP caucus colleagues, who took time out of their incredibly busy schedules—and I've come to realize over the last few months just how busy their schedules are—to come to London and help in my campaign. I can tell you that the motivation, the enthusiasm, the dedication of our volunteers was perhaps the single most important factor in my by-election success.

But there are other key factors that made a huge difference and contributed to my being here today. In particular, I want to thank NDP leader Andrea Horwath for her efforts in London West, not just during the by-election but in the many months leading up to the campaign. Her regular questions in the Legislature about London issues, her frequent visits to our community and her commitment to getting results for the people of Ontario were noticed by the voters of London West. And

although the people of London West did not have a history of voting NDP, they had a strong desire for change. They liked what they saw in Andrea Horwath and the Ontario NDP.

They also liked what they saw in me, as a working mother and professional policy researcher, a person of integrity who had served for 13 years as a trustee on the Thames Valley District School Board, whose roots in the community were deep and whose motivations for entering public life were clear.

One of the things I heard most often during the campaign was people's lack of trust in politicians at all levels of government, and I can't imagine what I would hear now with the auditor's report on the gas plants, the Senate suspensions and other recent events. But when I decided to put my name forward, I wanted to challenge the cynicism that so many people feel about politics. I wanted to show that principle and integrity can trump political self-interest. This was, in fact, what led me to declare as a candidate for the NDP.

In particular, it was the imposition of Bill 115, the politically motivated attempt to gut collective agreements and flex some muscle against public sector unions, that became the tipping point in my decision to run for provincial office. I know that Bill 115 was an important factor in the election of my friend and former trustee colleague, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, and it is in many ways the elephant in the room for the bill we are debating this morning, Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

Bill 115 was the Liberals' final offer during the last round of collective bargaining, if what happened last spring could be called bargaining at all. Bargaining is supposed to be a process in which both sides bring issues to the table and negotiate and discuss about the priorities they want to achieve. It is a process of give and take, in which both sides recognize that they may have to give a little here to move forward in other areas. This is not what happened last spring.

Instead, the Liberals placed a series of non-negotiable items on the table and said to both unions and school boards, "Take it or leave it, and if you don't take it, we're going to force you to take it by legislating collective agreements." I know all this because I was there. I was there as a trustee and former chair of a school board, and I was there as a member of the executive of the Ontario Public School Boards Association. I was, quite frankly, appalled by the government's willingness to risk all the gains that had been made in public education over the years and to throw our system and our students into turmoil.

I don't mind saying that gains had been made in public education, particularly since the crisis under Mike Harris and the Tories, because I am someone who believes in acknowledging when good ideas come forward, regardless of which party they come from, if those ideas are going to improve the lives of the people of this province. In fact, I was ready to leave partisan politics back in 1995, when I moved to London with my husband, who is a political science professor at Huron University College, after having worked as a political staffer to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations during the NDP government.

I had done my undergrad at Western and looked forward to returning to London and making London my home. I was raised in Dundas, Ontario, the eldest of three children born to immigrant parents; my father is German, and my mother was from Scotland. They arrived in their teens with little formal education and, in my father's case, very little English. But my father was able to learn a trade as a carpenter and, thanks to his union, earned a decent living enabling him to support his wife and three children.

My brother, who is now 50 and lives at home with my dad, has an intellectual disability. It was the experience of growing up with him, and seeing the bullying he went through at school and my mother's efforts to advocate on his behalf, that contributed to my interest in public education and my commitment to ensuring that students have the supports they need to be successful. It was also what drew me to the NDP, the party most committed to the full participation of people with disabilities.

I joined the NDP when I was doing my master's in political science at McMaster University, and became involved in the 1987 federal by-election in Hamilton Mountain. As a young woman, I was inspired by NDP candidate and former Ottawa mayor Marion Dewar, who became the first of many strong women mentors for me. Marion ran successfully in that by-election and offered me a job on Parliament Hill.

After three years in Ottawa, I came here to Queen's Park in 1990 to work in the minister's office with Marilyn Churley, another important mentor for me and someone who later broke new ground for women across Canada as Ontario's first woman Deputy Speaker.

Following the 1995 election, we moved to London, where I was able to spend some time at home with my family. My son was a toddler at the time, and I had a brand new infant daughter. I also returned to school for a postgraduate certificate at Fanshawe College and embarked on a career as a communications consultant and, later, policy researcher. For the past decade, I have worked at Academica Group, a private sector research firm located in London West.

When my son started JK in 1997, I was excited about taking on a new role as a parent and becoming involved in my school community. But I was shocked and dismayed by the chaos created in education by the Harris government's radical overhaul of school board governance and education funding.

When the first post-amalgamation election was held in 2000, I decided to run for the Thames Valley District School Board. I was proud to work with trustees across the province to advocate for students, including Premier Wynne and Minister Sandals, who were both trustees at the time, in opposing the Harris cuts and demanding that public education be adequately funded.

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But of all the initiatives I've worked on over my years at the school board, I'm proudest of the work I did on behalf of LGBT students in 2003, who held a protest on the lawn of the school board because they did not feel safe in our schools. This was before same-sex marriage was legalized in Canada and long before the province legislated gay-straight alliances. To address the student concerns, I led an ad hoc committee that developed a comprehensive action plan, including GSAs, to address discrimination against LGBT students.

At the board, I've had a long-standing interest in the needs of marginalized and at-risk youth, and sat for many years on the special education advisory committee and the First Nations advisory committee.

I also had the opportunity to meet regularly with area MPPs, and I have to say how impressed I consistently was by the interest and commitment to public education that was shown by MPPs from all three parties. In particular, I want to acknowledge the member from London—Fanshawe, now my colleague in the NDP caucus; the Minister of Health, who is also the member from London North Centre; the member from Oxford, Uncle Ernie; the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London; and the former member from London West, Chris Bentley—who all took the time to come to meetings with trustees to hear the school board perspective on provincial issues and to take the concerns forward to Queen's Park.

As the new member for London West, I want to thank former MPP Chris Bentley for his 10 years of dedicated service to our community. During the by-election, I heard lots of concerns about the gas plants and the Liberals' record in government, but at the same time, people also told me about the respect they had for Chris Bentley as a person and as someone who was active and involved and committed to his community.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the issues that were top of mind for people during the by-election and the issues on which the voters of London West expect to see their government take action. London West is largely a residential community with higher-than-average income levels and higher-than-average levels of education. It has many unique neighbourhoods that are known for their strong sense of community and civic engagement, with residents who come together to celebrate and collaborate on community projects. It includes London's largest urban green space, Springbank Park, the setting for many charitable walks and community picnics that demonstrate the spirit of generosity and volunteerism that is the core of London West.

The riding is also enriched by the many immigrants and new Canadians, primarily from the Latino and Mus-

lim communities, who share their culture and traditions and strengthen intercultural dialogue and exchange.

Many of the residents of my riding are white-collar professionals and knowledge-economy workers employed in MUSH sector jobs in municipal offices, the university, schools and hospitals. London lays claim to several world-class medical research facilities as well as the high-profile post-secondary institutions of Western University and Fanshawe College. I'm proud to say I'm a graduate of both.

Although the riding does not have a large number of manufacturing firms, many manufacturing sector workers live within its boundaries and have been hard hit by manufacturing job losses following the 2008 recession. Just yesterday, I received a phone call from a constituent whose daughter was laid off by Kellogg's after 30 years in the factory. Now 50 years old, this woman is worried about whether she will be able to find another job at all and how in the world she's going to manage until retirement.

The riding is also home to many retail and service sector workers, now called the new "precariat," who are struggling to make ends meet in low-wage, precarious employment.

As with many urban centres, there is also growing income polarization within the riding. There are areas of great affluence side by side with neighbourhoods made up almost entirely of public housing. My colleague John Vanthof knows something about that. The residents in these complexes face deeply rooted challenges of poverty, ill health and unemployment. I want to thank John for the day he spent canvassing with me.

There are clusters of apartment buildings filled with recent newcomers who face all the challenges involved in settlement and immigrant integration, as well as the barriers to employment created by lack of recognition of their professional skills and educational credentials.

But most of the riding is made up of middle-class neighbourhoods with families who are caught in the dual squeeze of caring for aging parents and raising their children. Too many of these families are seeing their kids graduate from post-secondary education without any prospects for work in London or indeed anywhere in southern Ontario.

As MPP for London West, I'm excited about the opportunity to participate in developing solutions to some of these challenges by applying the research I've been involved in as director of policy at Academica Group. Working in the private sector, in a firm with less than 20 staff, my experience at Academica Group has given me insights into some of the challenges facing the small business community. With much of my research focused on post-secondary education and the labour market, I bring detailed knowledge of issues related to youth employment and transitions from school to work.

For too long, Ontario's approach to bridging students from education to the labour market has been haphazard and inconsistent. For the past three years, I've been leading a multi-phase project for the Higher Education

Quality Council of Ontario, or HEQCO, involving 14 Ontario post-secondary institutions. The project looked at issues around post-secondary work-integrated learning programs, such as co-ops, internships, field placements, practicums and service learning. Using data gathered from employers, faculty and post-secondary graduates, the study is identifying the kinds of supports needed by employers to offer work-integrated learning opportunities to students, and the supports needed by students to enable them to apply their learning to real-world experiences and to critically reflect on their experiences when they return to the classroom.

I've also been working locally with the London Economic Development Corp. and the Elgin Middlesex Oxford Workforce Planning and Development Board on an innovative local labour market information project that will be launched in the very near future. The project brings together stakeholders from business, education, employment service providers and government and uses best practices identified by the OECD to better utilize skills in the local economy.

I want to mention two other projects I worked on that had great meaning for me and offered policy insights that I will take forward as MPP. One was a study of bridging programs for internationally trained professionals, programs that helped them bridge the gaps in their foreign qualifications and meet the criteria to practise their skills in Ontario. Another was a series of advocacy and awareness initiatives to encourage employers to hire people with disabilities.

In addition to these policy priorities, I am also excited about being able to support some of the incredible things that are happening in London right now that have the potential to transform our local economy, given the right kinds of government and community investments.

Recently, I had the privilege of meeting with people in our community who are truly change agents, along with NDP leader Andrea Horwath and the member from London-Fanshawe. We met with the board of Emerging Leaders, a community-led initiative that is focused on the retention, development and engagement of young people aged 20 to 44, to create a more vibrant, inclusive and dynamic London community.

We also met with representatives from the London Youth Advisory Council, an elected municipal body with the mandate to engage and empower youth and to give young people between the ages of 15 and 25 a voice in building a better city.

Emerging Leaders and the London Youth Advisory Council have launched a campaign urging local employers to hire young people without requiring them to have three to five years of work experience. This recognizes that today's young people are better educated than all previous generations, but are caught in a Catch-22 of "can't get a job without experience" and "Can't get experience without a job."

We also met with representatives of Pillar Nonprofit Network, which works on behalf of more than 300 London non-profits to support cross-sector collaboration

between the private sector, the public sector and civil society groups as a means of addressing poverty, fostering social innovation and increasing the collective impact of non-profit organizations in London.

Pillar is leading an effort to grow the social economy—that is, businesses with a social purpose—which, as we know, is not only a vital component of a dynamic economic development strategy, but is also one of the best ways to create jobs for youth and marginalized workers, while addressing human, environmental and community needs.

0920

I want to thank MPPs on all sides of this House for the warm welcome you have given me since I first arrived in this place, and in particular, my NDP caucus colleagues. I'm looking forward to working with MPPs from all parties, and I've seen some of the consensus that has been achieved when we work hard on legislation to identify some common ground and move forward to achieve common goals. I am committed to putting in place a robust policy framework that will enable the social economy to thrive, ensure that quality health care services are there when people need them, enable seniors to age with dignity in their own homes or in quality long-term-care facilities, and create an inclusive economy which everyone can participate in and benefit from. Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: It really is refreshing, and also hopeful, listening to the member from London West. She obviously is a very dedicated, committed representative of her riding. What's refreshing about what she said is that—too many times in politics, we see people present themselves as candidates, and when I ask them all, "What did you do in your community? What did you do?" "Well, no, I want to be elected." This member from London West obviously has a proven track record of fighting for what she believes in. She's passionate and also very knowledgeable. So I think the people of London West, despite that it's not our party—I think she's going to add a lot to this Legislature, and I think she's going to do a lot of good work for the people of London West, because she has the knowledge, the commitment and the attitude that we're here in this place to find common ground and to get things done for the people of whether it be London West or all of Ontario.

As you know, for too many days in this Legislature—most of the time, sadly, is being spent on playing political games. That does not benefit the people of London West; it doesn't benefit the people of Ontario. As she listed, there are so many issues facing the people of London West, as are facing all of our ridings. The work we've got to do is to get a handle on those issues to benefit the people. I've been here for a number of years, and I can tell you I am still hopeful that we can do a lot of good. There's amazing power in this Legislature to do good. That's what we should be concentrating on. If we can get that kind of attitude demonstrated by the member

from London West and her knowledge—I think there's a lot of beneficial results for the people, whether it be in education, whether it be for people in need. So I want to congratulate the member for her very meaningful speech.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: I want to first of all congratulate the member for London West on her maiden speech. One of my favourite times in this Legislature is to sit and listen to folks who are new to this place give their perspective and offer their thanks to the voters who entrusted them. I think we all share one thing here: As 107 men and women, we are entrusted by our constituents to represent them, and to represent them well. I think this is an opportunity for us to share a little bit of insight into ourselves, when we provide our maiden speeches, and I got a little bit of an insight on the new member from London West, her background, her experience and some of her interests. But most importantly, I think what we all can aspire to do in this Legislature—is that we're here to represent our constituents. What I heard in the member from London West's speech today is that she intends to do exactly that.

I think that sometimes in the cut and thrust of debate in this Legislature we actually forget a little bit about why we were sent here and who we are here to represent. Each and every day that I stand in my place as the member for Cambridge, I have to remind myself that this is about not myself and not my political party but about the people that I represent. I hope that the member for London West—I think she obviously shares that perspective and shares that commitment to her constituents, much like each member of this Legislature, 107 of us, who had to do the same thing: seek election, do the cut and thrust of debate through that process and finally have the opportunity and privilege to serve in this wonderful, wonderful place.

So I want to congratulate the member from London West on her election and on her contributions to this place and to the debate that we're going to have now and in the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I am so thrilled and very proud to stand here today and welcome the member from London West, and congratulate her for a wonderful speech. It was very informative and educational, and I learned a lot of things about the member today, more than I have since I met her.

I also want to say that I'm very honoured that she is here, because I know she is going to represent London West constituents 100%. Her dedication and commitment to her job are very well received, and it's very evident that that's what she is here for. She's here to work for the people, and she's here to get results. That's what our party has been doing—since we've been elected in 2011. We're here to make sure that life gets better for the people of Ontario.

I'm also very proud of the fact that the NDP is one of the only parties here in the Legislature—the only one, I

should correct myself—that has almost 50% representation of women. We know that it's very difficult for women to make those decisions to run in politics, because they do have that juggling act of being a mother, a wife, a partner, a career person—and those things are difficult—and it takes a lot of gumption to run for office. I know that women have a difficult time to make that decision, when they're asked to run, but I think the face of politics is better when women are involved.

So again, I say congratulations and welcome to the Legislature. You're a wonderful addition to the team. I know that all the colleagues here in the House—and it sounds like all parties—are very enthusiastic to have you here, and we appreciate that you said “yes” and won the by-election. We look forward to you doing a lot of things in the Legislature for the people of London West.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I would like to begin by also congratulating the member from London West on her maiden speech, and again, like the member for London–Fanshawe said, I learned a lot about you. I'm very impressed by your record of service and the experience you bring. Especially, I did not know that you were a school trustee. That certainly brings a new lens to the debate we are having on the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2013. I know that you will be able to bring a wealth of perspective to this, having worked in the trenches in the education sector. So thank you so much and, once again, congratulations. I wish you very well.

I do want to spend a few minutes speaking about Bill 122. At its core, it's very simple: If I'm paying for something, I want to have a say in how it's spent. That's what this is about. This is about giving the province of Ontario, which is the primary funder, in fact the only funder, of public school education, both the Catholic and the public school sectors in Ontario—there is no formal role in bargaining for the province, and that is what this act seeks to do. What it's seeking to do is say that there are three stakeholders in this: There are the employer groups, there are the employee groups, and then there is the funder, which happens to be the province of Ontario.

This is much-required clarity. I mean, we've been at the table in an informal way, and sometimes it has worked and sometimes it hasn't worked. It's important to learn from the past and build on it, and that is what this bill does. So I'm very pleased that we have brought this forward. It's a made-in-Ontario model. It is unique. It is tailored to our special needs, our funding model. It's much needed, and I believe we need to bring it in place before the next round of bargaining within the school system occurs. I look forward to support from all parties.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for London West, you have two minutes.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, the member from Cambridge, the member from London–Fanshawe and the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for the wonderfully kind comments you made. I feel somewhat at a disadvantage,

because you now know all about me and I'm going to have to look through Hansard to find out the same things about you. But many of the comments you made apply equally to everyone in this House. Collectively working together, finding that common ground, we can do good, as the member from Eglinton–Lawrence said, and we can represent our constituents with integrity, with principle and with a commitment to bringing forward the concerns that matter to the people who live in our communities.

0930

I want to acknowledge the comments that were made by the member from London–Fanshawe about the importance of electing women to public office and the obligation that all of us have, as women legislators, to mentor young women and encourage them to recognize that they have a voice, that they have a role to play in public life—because it is challenging for women to want to enter the cut and thrust of politics. It can be intimidating and it may not be an environment that women feel particularly comfortable in.

As the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville said, we all bring incredibly rich and varied experiences and backgrounds to this place. Together, we are making democracy better when we have that exchange of ideas and opinions across the House and work together to do good things for the people of this province.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

An Act respecting the Human Resources Professionals Association / Loi concernant l'Association des professionnels en ressources humaines.

An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 and to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to provide for a tax credit to farmers for donating certain agricultural products that they have produced / Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur les aliments locaux et modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour prévoir un crédit d'impôt pour les agriculteurs qui font don de certains produits agricoles qu'ils ont produits.

An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device / Loi visant à mieux protéger les consommateurs en ce qui concerne les conventions de consommation portant sur les services sans fil accessibles au moyen d'un téléphone cellulaire, d'un téléphone intelligent ou de tout autre appareil mobile semblable.

An Act to amend the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

An Act to amend the Executive Council Act and the Legislative Assembly Act in relation to accommodation allowances / Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Conseil exécutif et la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative en ce qui concerne les allocations de logement.

SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, at the start, I'd just like to say that I'll be sharing my time with the Minister of Labour.

Before I get under way, I want to join with my colleagues in complimenting the member for London West on her excellent maiden speech. We welcome her. She's been a fine member. Her contributions in the Legislature have always been positive and constructive and well-researched ones, and I think this is the kind of member that gives all elected members a good name.

Applause.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you for that thunderous applause.

Speaker, we're here to talk about Bill 122. Bill 122 is a continuing step forward in the evolution of a process, a process to do something that is by its definition very, very difficult. If passed, the legislation would create central tables where government trustee associations and unions or teacher federations could resolve monetary and policy issues in collective free bargaining.

There is some urgency to do this. Virtually all collective agreements in the education sector will expire next year—August 31, 2014.

Now, to put some scope on what I said earlier, that this is a large and complex problem, there are some 472 different collective agreements covering 127,000 full-time-equivalent regular teachers, an unspecified number of occasional teachers and 67,000 unionized support staff. This speaks to the need to be able to approach this very large and very important set of collective bargaining with a much better approach than we've had in the past.

The intent is to have the boards and their unions be able to resolve local issues in free local collective bargaining. If passed, the legislation would create two strike or lockout windows at the provincial level and at the local level. If passed, the legislation would also provide for three-way ratification at the central level by the government of Ontario, trustee associations and unions.

One may ask what entities are involved in this. If passed, the legislation establishes central employee bargaining agents for teachers, who would be encompassed under the following: the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, the Ontario English Catholic

Teachers' Association and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.

Again, if passed, the legislation would establish the following central employer bargaining representatives: l'Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques, l'Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques, the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association and the Ontario Public School Boards' Association.

This is important because as Ontario has developed, we've also evolved forward in the manner in which we've approached that collective bargaining. Since some 15 years ago, local school boards have had little authority to directly levy taxation and, as such, to generate local funding. However, those same boards have retained sole authority to bargain collective agreements. So it speaks to the essential need for both resources and responsibility in this.

The province provides the funding for the sector but, conversely, has no statutory authority to participate in collective bargaining. As a result, this framework, undertaken with the best intentions of two governments, ours and the one that preceded us, has produced some real confusion about the roles and responsibilities between school boards, between trustee associations and the government.

Under the existing framework, flawed as it was, the government offered three voluntary provincial discussion tables, in 2004, 2008 and 2012. Last year, in 2012, some parties chose not to participate in the provincial discussion table, and it resulted, in August 2012, in the government enacting the Putting Students First Act that, in the end, imposed collective agreements on the education sector.

This was an outcome that no one sought, it was an outcome that no one was happy with, and it's an outcome that, very frankly, this legislation, if enacted, would seek to mitigate by providing a means for the different parties to arrive at reasonable, fair consensus to produce a better-quality collective agreement and, very frankly, one with a better process.

Early in 2013, this year, the government began discussions with the parties to agree to new terms outlined in a series of memoranda of understanding to be appended to the 2012-14 collective agreements.

I'm sure that the Minister of Labour has many more enlightening comments to offer, and I thank you very much for the time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me and giving me the opportunity to speak.

I want to thank the member from Mississauga—Streetsville for his comments on this very important bill, Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2013.

0940

First of all, Speaker, I want to congratulate the Minister of Education for her commitment and dedication and

extremely hard work on drafting this particular bill. I speak at first hand, given the close proximity in which the Ministry of Labour worked with the Ministry of Education in the whole consultation process with our partners in education and also the labour relations expert board within the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education in crafting this particular bill. There was quite an unprecedented level of close collaboration that went into the drafting of the bill, because we really wanted to make sure that the bill reflects the very balanced labour relations that are the hallmark of labour relations in Ontario, especially under this government over the last 10 years. Therefore, quite an effort and due diligence was put into the consultation phase and then the drafting of this bill to ensure that from a labour relations view, all the key elements that are outlined for a balanced labour relations system in the Ontario Labour Relations Act are maintained and reflected in this bill.

I want to thank the Minister of Education. Not only did she bring her own expertise on this file as a former school board trustee, but she really went out of her way to seek the advice of the Ministry of Labour to make sure that we've got the right balance in this particular bill.

I also want to thank all our education partners—the teachers' federations, the school board associations, the trustee associations—for their hard work and good advice as this bill was crafted, because we wanted to make sure that all partners are working together in getting the right balance, in getting the right piece of legislation, a process that really will help advance our cause of a better education system in Ontario. I feel that this bill really does accomplish that.

Speaker, I think we have spoken often in this House, and it's worth repeating, of the great accomplishments that we have made in education in the last 10 years in our province. It has been a great aspect, a part of the attention of our government, to ensure that education continues to grow and that our children are getting one of the best educations. I want to thank teachers and all our support workers and everybody who works in the education sector for their hard work in getting us where we are today in terms of building one of the best and strongest education systems Ontario has ever had, perhaps, and that the results show Canada has, and making us so competitive around the world. I just look at the results in my community of Ottawa, and specifically my community of Ottawa Centre, the kind of great results that we're seeing in education, the level of education our children are getting, how engaged they are. For me, one of the key issues has always been narrowing the gap between those children who have a lot of the benefits and privileges and those for whom English or French may not be their first language or who are new to our community, new to our province. We are starting to see the narrowing of that gap taking place so significantly that we're really creating a level playing field, we're really making sure that all children in our education system are given equal opportunities to succeed. That has been a great achievement of the investments that our government has been able to make in education over the last 10 years.

Full-day kindergarten alone is making a tremendous impact. I've had the opportunity to speak to many parents, in my community of Ottawa Centre, whose children are going to full-day kindergarten. It's interesting to talk to those parents who have one child who went to a half-day program and one child now going to the full-day program. They will tell you themselves the great difference they're seeing in the development of their children. The child who is going to full-day kindergarten—his or her skill set, his or her competencies in social behaviour, in the learning of different things as a four- or five-year-old is tremendous. Parents know these differences and they are able to share that with you, and it's very heartening to see that.

I've got about 75% of the schools in my community of Ottawa Centre now offering full-day kindergarten, and there is a lot of excitement around that program. In fact, parents in the remaining 25% of schools which will be offering full-day kindergarten in the next academic year ask me often when that is going to happen, because they want the opportunity for their children to be able to attend full-day kindergarten.

Not to mention the kind of investments we've made in making sure that we have good school facilities—in the city of Ottawa alone, since 2003 we have built, renovated or expanded about 40 schools. That is just a tremendous investment, and I thank the Ministry of Education for really having confidence in my community of Ottawa and being able to create a world-class education system, amazing schools and facilities that are giving a whole new, great opportunity for our children to grow.

We want to make sure that those successes continue to grow, and in order for those successes to continue, we need to make sure that we have strong labour relations within our school system, that we remain on the path of strong partnership with our teachers and with our education support workers so that that level of quality of education, that focus on children remains very much part and parcel of our education system. I think that is the real foundation, that is the real glue that makes our education system succeed.

The key element of this particular bill, Bill 122, is to ensure that we have fair and balanced labour relations so that we can continue on that particular path. I'm really proud that our government has worked hard to restore fairness and balance in labour relations over the past 10 years, repairing the relationships that were broken before our government came into office. The result is that 97% of labour contracts in Ontario are now settled without disruptions. That is a remarkable achievement and a record that we need to continue to go on. This bill in particular is a great example of what can be accomplished when parties work together. We want to ensure that Ontario's education system remains one of the best in the world, and our goal is to improve student achievement and well-being and take our education system from great to excellent while ensuring long-term financial sustainability.

As I mentioned earlier, our respective ministries, Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education, worked

very closely, and we're really proud at the Ministry of Labour to be able to assist in helping develop a model that is outlined in this particular bill that will work for Ontario's education system and make sure that our children succeed.

Speaker, this proposed legislation is needed to create central tables for collective bargaining with formal rules for the province, trustee associations, school boards, teacher federations and support staff unions. By creating a formal provincial level of bargaining, recognizing the unique roles of each party, this legislation would ensure a stable framework for labour negotiations that will ensure a fair and binding process that is clear to all parties.

So what is this bill trying to do if it is passed? The proposed legislation would create two tiers of bargaining. At the central tier, the government and the trustee associations form a management team to bargain central agreements with unions. At the local tier, the local school boards and their employees would bargain local agreements. So one key, fundamental element of this particular piece of legislation is having two tiers of bargaining, one at the central level, where government is very much part and parcel working along with trustee associations and, of course, then the second tier, which is at a local level, where local school board trustees are negotiating with local teacher federations.

0950

The second key element of this bill is to create a formal role for the government at the table. The proposed role will allow the government to formulate mandates in partnership with the trustee association and to participate in central bargaining on the key issues. That's a very important step, Speaker, because up to now, as you may know, the government's role was not formalized.

Up to now, the last three rounds of negotiations, if you look at it—when the central bargaining took place, that was totally on a voluntary basis, where the government, as the funder, invited all parties to come around the table and was able to negotiate. That's how the 2004 negotiations were done; that's how 2008 was done. They worked in those two instances. We know that in 2011 we tried to do the same thing, and it did not exactly take shape the way that it did in the first two rounds of negotiations. What we are doing through this bill is formalizing that whole process, central bargaining, and formalizing the role for government as the funder in that negotiating process around the table as well, which is key.

The third thing this bill does is to establish trustee associations as the statutory central employer bargaining agents for each of their respective sectors for the purposes of central bargaining—again, a very important role for trustee associations, making sure that that local voice is present at the central level, working along with the government as a joint management team representing the point of view of the employer.

Lastly, in terms of a key feature of this bill, it's that it creates a three-way ratification of central agreements between the government, trustee associations and unions. In other words, all three parties—the government, trustee

associations and the unions—would have to ratify the agreement in order for it to pass. Again, it's a difference from how the system has worked in the past, where the only two parties to the agreement were the trustee associations—the local school boards, in essence—and the unions. In this case, we're sort of formalizing what has happened, essentially, in the last three rounds of negotiations and making sure that all three parties have a role to play.

Speaker, this model really helps us ensure that there's constructive dialogue and that we're maintaining positive relationships. It really allows for parties to work together—again, keeping in mind that there are balanced labour relations practices that are very much part and parcel of the whole negotiating process. We know through Supreme Court decisions, like the BC health decision and the Fraser decision that emanated out of Ontario, that good-faith bargaining is very much the essence of collective bargaining as a charter right. We have worked hard, working along with the Ministry of Education, to ensure that all those elements—the constitutional elements, the charter requirements through the Supreme Court in terms of having a process that allows for good-faith bargaining—are very much part and parcel of this bill.

I very much encourage all members of this House to vote in support of this particular bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob Leone: I listened with intent to the Minister of Labour and to the member from Mississauga—Streetsville, I believe, who provided some comments on Bill 122. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that if anyone can probably explain the nuances of this bill, being a labour piece of legislation, it would be the Minister of Labour. So I expected him to elaborate on some of the details of this.

He touched upon it, I guess, in the second half of his discussion. But in the first half, I noticed that he didn't really talk about the piece of legislation at all. He talked about full-day kindergarten; he talked about the school system in Ottawa. He talked about many other things that I'm sure the minister agrees are very important to his constituents and to him as a member. But I think the funny part of that, in doing that, is that in talking about the "gains" that the minister was talking about—I mean, all those gains happened before this piece of legislation was formed. So if the justification is to see these gains succeed, I'm not really sure how that fits in nicely or squares nicely with this piece of legislation.

What it does point to is the fact that the minister, much like myself, wants to talk about these things. He wants to talk about full-day kindergarten. He wants to talk about the plight of his schools in Ottawa. He wants to talk about how we can make improvements to our system. So do I, Mr. Speaker. Yet we've had two pieces of legislation, since I've been appointed critic for education, that actually do nothing but talk about process, rather than talk about the kinds of reforms and the kinds of things we can do to improve our education system.

That is, in a nutshell, where I see this is going to go. If I can just see how the comments and questions from the Liberals are going to proceed on this—they're going to talk about their gains, they're going to talk a little bit about the bill, but the two never square up. We really want to improve our schools, and this bill isn't really going to do any of that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we've stood down our lead and you will be hearing that lead from our education critic, the member from Toronto—Danforth, shortly—I'm sure next week at some point.

Just some general comments about Bill 122: Obviously, as a caucus, we're looking at this, we're talking to stakeholders, we're looking at possible amendments, ways of making it stronger in terms of support. But the elephant in the room, Mr. Speaker, is truly the state of education in this province. It's pretty bleak, quite frankly.

On the post-secondary side, I know we're 10th out of 10 in terms of our investment per capita in our students. We have the highest post-secondary debt. We have the highest tuition fees in the country. That should be something that should shame us daily.

Certainly Bill 115 was more than an embarrassment; it was a direct attack on collective bargaining. That is, of course, what this attempts to rectify.

Also, the chronic underfunding of our schools: Anybody who walks into any school in their riding will see that our schools are—certainly in mine—chronically underfunded. I'm constantly bearing letters from my parents to this administration, begging and pleading for the very basic money they need to keep their schools afloat, and of course they don't get it. That's why parents are raising in excess of \$500 million a year in fundraising just for the basics for their students.

That's the central problem here. That's the core problem of our educational system. It's something that this government really has not addressed now going into their 11th year here at Queen's Park. A government that wanted to see itself as the education government has failed miserably on this file, and Bill 122, whatever its strengths or weaknesses, is absolutely not going to deliver in a way that should be delivered on the educational file.

We'll have more to say on this and the state of our system in the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to respond to the comments from the member from Mississauga—Streetsville and the Minister of Labour.

The Minister of Labour mentioned schools in Ottawa—and the minister of francophone affairs said, "I really want to talk about the francophone schools in Ottawa and throughout the province," because we notice that there are some of the representatives from the francophone school system. What she wanted to convey

was how proud she is of the wonderful job that the francophone schools both in her riding and throughout the province are doing, and their astoundingly good results on the provincial test results which they have achieved over the last several years. That was from the minister of francophone affairs.

I wanted to comment, in a way, on something that the member from London West said in her maiden speech—because, like me, she has a background as a school board trustee. She talked about her experience with negotiations, and she talked about the fact that bargaining is a matter of give and take; that when bargaining is working properly there's compromise, and the compromise leads to solutions.

I'd like to thank the Minister of Labour and his people for being part of exactly that sort of process which led to the creation of Bill 122—because there was a check-in with the various education partners, both on the management side and the union side, facilitated by the officials from the Ministry of Labour. We worked very closely with different people with different points of view, and I think it's fair to say the unions don't see everything they wanted to see; the school boards don't see everything they wanted to see. Quite frankly, the government has made some compromises too. But it is a compromise.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It is interesting to listen to some of the feedback here on Bill 122.

I'd like to also welcome and thank the member from London West for her inaugural speech this morning. I know how interesting that can be for a member who is new here. She did a great job. Although she's not here right now to hear, I'm sure she'll hear—

Interjection: Send her the Hansard.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Send her the Hansard, yes.

Bill 122, as we know, is a very complicated, technical bill. I happen to come from a labour relations background and understand—I've sat at the negotiation table many times talking to and negotiating with unions in many different circumstances, some of them better than others, and the one thing I do know is that it is extremely difficult to legislate good negotiations. It is a flowing concept that takes a different life every time you do it. Depending on who the group is that you're dealing with, depending on the issues of the day, depending on the people who are being represented by the unions—so many different factors factor in.

My concern with Bill 122 is, trying to do too much and trying to fix too much, and then what are we going to end up with in the future? It might work really well this time. But is it going to work the next time, when we have different problems and different pressures on our economy and we have different pressures on our school systems and we have different pressures on our politics, we have different parties in power? There are so many different factors here that I think could render this bill and this effort kind of moot, so my concerns surround

that. We can't really imprint into time a bill that's going to guide us for the rest of our days. We need to have more flexibility. We need to certainly not have a bill as technical as this—having negotiators at the table hamstrung trying to figure out which direction they're going to go.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Labour, you have two minutes.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the members from Cambridge, Parkdale–High Park, Barrie and the Minister of Education for their comments, and they were all good comments in terms of what I was saying. I just want to make two specific comments, Speaker, in response. Number one is that the education system is very much premised on people. It's a system that is delivered by people for the benefit of people, i.e. young children. That is why it is extremely important that we have good labour relations in our whole education system—because if we have good labour relations, if we have good working conditions in our schools, you know we will be able to accomplish the goals we have set out in terms of higher student achievement, in narrowing the gap, in making sure that our children are getting the best education possible. If we don't have good working conditions, if we don't have solid labour relations, the aspirations towards those goals become that much more difficult. That is why this bill is very, very important: to make sure that we've got a solid foundation within our school system in terms of labour relations so that we can continue on the path of building one of the best education systems in the world, as we have done over the last 10 years with the incredible investments that we have made in our educational system, in partnership with the education workers.

The second point, to the member from Barrie—I think he raises a very good point: You want to have a system in place that can withstand various other factors that may come over time. We feel very strongly that we have provided for that foundation; that what this bill does is it puts a very rigorous process in place that will allow for good-faith bargaining to take place no matter what the political climate or economic situation may be. That's a very important thing: that you want to have strong principles in place for collective bargaining so that external factors become irrelevant and it allows for a place, an avenue, to engage in that good-faith bargaining and be able to then result in settlements, in agreements that will provide for a better education for our children.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I just want to remind members of the Legislature—and it's a gentle reminder—that we should not be making references to people who are not in their seat.

Secondly, on the questions and comments, we should restrict our comments to the previous speaker, not speakers who have gone by. Thank you very much.

Further debate? The member from Barrie.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you, Speaker. I actually do apologize for making that reference. It was inadvertent and meant in a—

Mr. Rob Leone: It was complimentary.

Mr. Rod Jackson: —in compliments rather than the negative.

I already mentioned briefly, in my last two minutes, my concerns with this bill and the fact that I am worried that it has flexibility when we go forward.

As I said before, I've had the opportunity to be involved in many negotiations with large unions and some large companies, seeing these things go many different ways, and it is really interesting. Part of the dynamic of a labour negotiation system is the fact that they have the ability to move in different directions, and, in many cases, with little guidance from anyone else other than people at the table.

My concern is, with a bill as technical as this—and in many cases trying to understand it—it adds more difficulty to a system that needs less. When we add a tier of negotiation here, it really does concern me a little bit that more isn't going to be better, in this case. I always find, especially when you add a tier into a negotiation, you have more people and more confusion about direction, about who's going where.

I know that every school board in Ontario, and indeed every school board in Canada, has much different pressures on it than on the others. For example, the Toronto District School Board is going to have a much different scale of capacity and certainly much different interests than, say, a school board in far northern Ontario, and they're going to need a much different set of standards and ideas and dialogue at the table. Those are often best addressed at the local level. Those local people know what their local needs are.

I'm not saying this can't work, but I'm also saying that we need to be very careful that we don't try to steer the ship from this building. That can do more damage than good, in many cases. But at the same time, sometimes there needs to be a little bit of guidance, I think, to make sure that we keep things going.

We've found, certainly, that the roles of different parties in collective bargaining in the education sector, and the voluntary framework that we've had, have run into some problems, and that's why we've come down this road to this bill and some of the issues over Bill 115 and politicizing, in many ways, the negotiation process. I think we've seen how that can really damage relationships between those that are negotiating on both sides. It is something that needs to be clarified.

For me, clarity means keeping it simple. All of us have learned from our high school teachers the KISS rule: Keep it simple, stupid. It's something that we all need to live by, really. The simpler we keep it, the better it is, in many cases. I worry that this complicates something that doesn't really need to be as complicated as it is.

We also believe that when you have a piece of legislation like this that is recognizing some of the difficulties that have happened in the past, it is very advantageous, if we have something like a sunset clause involved in this legislation, that we'll actually be able to look back at it and say, "We were able to put some legislation in this year that helped us with the problems we had this year to address some problems from the past. But do you know

what? In the future, we're going to see this going a different way."

If a sunset clause was included in this legislation, I think it would highly benefit not only all the people who are at the negotiating table on both sides; I think the kids of this province are going to benefit from that too, because we know that their needs change on a very regular basis.

I know the Minister of Labour was mentioning that this is something that will benefit all the people at the table and that we've got to remember what the focus is on here. Something that struck me as interesting is: Right away, I thought, "Of course, he's going to say 'the kids.'" It wasn't the first thing out of his mouth, which I found a little bit disturbing. What we really are doing this for, what we really want to achieve with any bill to do with education, is the welfare of our children, the welfare of their education.

I have two young kids; one is 12 and one is 10. They're both in our school system. They have fantastic teachers who do a great job. I was able to speak with their teachers, actually, the day before yesterday. They do an amazing job, and they're very happy with it.

1010

I've also become very aware of a local family who have some severe issues with the education system, because their child has some special needs. It's interesting to me because this young man is actually a friend of my son's. I had no idea he had any sort of special needs, and he does. I fear for this child, because there's nothing in place in this integrated system that we have for children with many different special needs—and there are many different types of them—to accommodate him. He's at the point now where he has had these special needs—when they were diagnosed for a couple of months last year, after he'd been admitted to Sick Children's Hospital down here in Toronto to take care of them. When he went back to school, he was given an education assistant to help him throughout his day, to maintain his health, and when he was in that position, he did well in school, he was doing well socially; all these sorts of different things he was doing really well in. Well, at the end of the year, they told him he wasn't going to have access to his education assistant when he came back to school in September.

So here we have a child that we know can have the tools to succeed if we actually focus on that, if we focus on giving him the tools he needs to bring his potential out to be the next MPP, to be the next doctor or lawyer or tradesperson in our community. Right now, this child's parents are worried that he's going to get lost, slip through the cracks and end up back at SickKids fighting for his life.

This is something that, it seems to me, is very simple, but it's not being addressed by either the school board or the ministry, and it's one example of many that I know that are out there. We talk about the victory of integrating our kids into our education system, and there are some success stories, but in many cases we're failing them. We're failing them because we don't have the right

resources on the front lines of our education system to be able to give them the results that they need to have, and it's a shame. It's not a reflection on the staff who are there; in fact, I believe the staff who are working with these kids, the EAs and the teachers—and if the government was listening, they might get something out of this—actually need more resources. We need to focus on their training, we need to focus on how many of them there are, and even the money.

The distribution of the money that's going into the education system is appalling. In fact, in Barrie alone, in the Simcoe county district school system, spending increased year over year for the past several years, with a decreased enrolment. So we're spending more money, less kids going to the school, and yet science programs are being cut at local high schools, schools shut down and a Taj Mahal—if you've ever visited the Simcoe County District School Board and been to that building, it's nicer than this one. It is absolutely beautiful. It's a Taj Mahal school board office. Instead of putting a new HVAC system into a school in the heart of downtown Barrie, they replaced the one in the almost brand new school board building. It is quite amazing that the priorities there didn't match up—and at the same time we're cutting science classes, cutting music classes. Schools are being shut down in Barrie, in the heart of our downtown, which is the heartbeat and the lifeblood of any city, and then we focus on the backend stuff.

This whole bill is focusing on labour relations with teachers, which I think needs to be focused on—we need to talk about this stuff—but not to the detriment of dealing with the front-line issues that our kids deal with.

In fact, my wife is president of the parent-teacher council of our school, and the amount of work that parents do to keep those schools open, the amount of money they raise for athletic equipment and for landscaping and for signs is amazing. The amount of effort that the parents put into this is great, and thank God we have parents who are willing to put forth their effort and time, away from their jobs in many cases, and sacrifice what they do to get the job done.

It would be really great if this government would focus on those sorts of front-line things too and keep those science classes open and keep some of those great schools in the cores of our cities open so that we can attract more people to live in the places that we need them to live in in our cities, which is in the middle of them, not on the outskirts of them, especially in a city like Barrie.

It's something we need to really focus on in the big picture—and make sure that we focus on children with special needs. We spent years, since the 1970s, integrating these kids into our system so they could live integrated, productive lives in our communities, and they're not. They've been integrated, but they're not being given the right potential and the right tools to be able to succeed—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to welcome in the House today a group of women who are visiting Hamilton as part of the women's exchange program of Canada World Youth. They come from Nicaragua, Honduras and various communities across Canada. Please help me welcome—and bear with me—Carmen Acunia, Deema Sierra, Ena Rodriguez, Grisselda Hernandez, Gyneska Velaski, Judith Gutiérrez, Karen Nenio, Krystal Alicia Bell, Maria Urbina, Mirian Bermudez—they're going to hate me after this, Speaker—Neweme Lowhando, Nubia Melara, Teanna Ducharme, Ambar Deras, Karen Molina and Kelsey Pinch.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I call members' attention to the members' east gallery. It's my pleasure to introduce a very good friend and my mentor, former Mississauga North MPP Steven Offer, on the day that both of us have served 10 years and 37 days in the Legislature.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce my new legislative assistant, Sara Cleland.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's my pleasure today to welcome Mr. David Tanovich, who is with us in the gallery. David teaches law at the University of Windsor, but, more importantly, he's the father of page Evan Tanovich. Welcome, David.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome the family of page Arianna Dossa—mother, Dinar Dossa; father, Farid Dossa; and younger sister Hannah Dossa—to the Legislature today, from the great riding of Pickering—Scarborough East. Welcome.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It's my pleasure to introduce page Phoebe Gao from my riding of Carleton—Mississippi Mills. Her parents are here today in the members' gallery: Xiang Sun, Wei Gao—and her brother Leo Gao.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It is my pleasure to introduce page Aiden Wong's mother, Samantha, and his sister Holly Wong, from Richmond Hill, visiting the House.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to introduce, in the gallery, Carol Jolin, representing AEFO, which is the francophone teachers of Ontario. Welcome, Carol.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: It's my pleasure this morning to welcome Haicen Zhang and Yali Liu, the father and friend of today's page captain, Christina Zhang from Windsor West. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to introduce, in the gallery, Jeff Mole, who is a community energy planning consultant. I understand he's here to meet with several MPPs today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As is the tradition of the House, I would like to welcome to the members' gallery Mr. Steve Offer, former MPP for Mississauga North in the 33rd, 34th and 35th Parliaments, and Solicitor General for the 34th Parliament. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. It looks like my question will be for the Acting Premier this morning.

You hired Don Drummond to map the way out of the financial mess that you got us into. He told us that to balance the budget will require "tough decisions," and "most of the burden must fall on spending."

Now we understand that your plan is to shift the focus from restraint and go on a spending spree. Any family having trouble paying their bills knows that you don't run out and buy a swimming pool. What you're proposing over on that side is absolutely preposterous. You're using your MasterCard to pay off your Visa and your Visa to pay off your MasterCard. How do you expect people to believe you can balance the budget by 2017-18?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As the Premier has said on many occasions, we are implementing Drummond's recommendations. In fact, we've implemented 60% of them.

What is absolutely preposterous is when they stand up and say, "Implement Drummond; implement Drummond," and then when we do implement Drummond, they oppose us every single step of the way.

At the Ministry of Health, we made changes to physio; you objected to that every step of the way. We worked to bring down the price of drugs; you objected every step of the way. We had tough negotiations with physicians; you objected every step of the way. You've got to choose a lane.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: That's rich, considering this government added \$20 billion to our debt this year alone—just this year. When Moody's downgraded you, they also said that if you don't stabilize the debt burden, you will risk another credit downgrade.

You say you're going to spend and grow your way to balance, but the Bank of Canada just two weeks ago told us that Ontario will not meet our growth projections for this year, or for the next. You're not fooling anyone.

We're not the only ones who have seen through this fiscal facade. Yesterday, the revered Wall Street Journal reported that Ontario's fiscal situation is worse than California's, and the province will have trouble hitting its deficit target. And that's before your new spending announcement of yesterday.

Acting Premier, will you please tell us: Is the Wall Street Journal wrong in their forecast?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's pretty clear that there's a real difference between the opposition party and ourselves because, do you know what, Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: They have chosen to focus everything on reaching that zero deficit. We have chosen to grow the economy. We have chosen jobs. We believe

that the way to economic strength, the way to balance, is through growth, through jobs, through prosperity. We're still on track to balance, but I tell you, our Holy Grail is investing in our people, investing in our infrastructure and having a dynamic, thriving business community.

They only thing they care about is the deficit; we're not like that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: The Wall Street Journal isn't the only respected outlet who's not buying this line from you, Acting Premier. The Globe and Mail, this week, called your plan to encourage corporate investment "equal parts lunacy, desperation and a return to failed 1970s-style state planning." That's the Globe and Mail. The Globe also said, "There is a very clear sense in which the Ontario government is playing 'blame the victim' for the sorry state of the provincial economy"—not your own problem. These are hardly ringing endorsements; they're condemnations.

Now is not the time to play riverboat gambler with Ontario's finances. We need real leadership to return to prosperity.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Attorney General, come to order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Will you admit that you're in over your head and you just are not up to this job?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I did not get attention for you to start.

Acting Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Our priority is clear. We're focused on creating great jobs, attracting great jobs, and we're focused on helping support middle-class families and protecting key services. That's our priority.

What people like the members opposite don't understand is that achieving that zero deficit is—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —no victory if it means that people don't have jobs.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville, come to order.

New question.

1040

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question, as well, is to the Deputy Premier.

Yesterday, the Liberals survived a Progressive Conservative motion on the gas plants—thanks again to the NDP for sitting on their hands, abstaining and choosing, of course, the Liberal Party over the people of Ontario.

Together, the NDP and the Liberals have accomplished a great deal together. They doubled the debt in the past 10 years to \$270 billion. They ran a \$12-billion deficit. They voted to ensure that the horse racing industry would be destroyed in Ontario. They're keeping one million Ontarians from being gainfully employed. And there's one other thing that they've done together: They have found the OPP—in order to have investigations into the gas plant scandal and into the Ornge fiasco.

This marriage between the Liberals and the NDP has been utterly catastrophic for the people of Ontario. Will the Deputy Premier pull her party out of a coalition with the NDP and actually face the people and get a mandate for themselves?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, our Premier has made it very clear that we are working very hard to find common ground. The voters of this province sent a minority government to Queen's Park, and we are working to make minority government work. That means working with the opposition party sometimes. It means working with the NDP sometimes.

Our job is to make this government work, and that means working with both opposition parties so we can continue to improve the lives of the people in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Well, this Liberal government only survives because of the help of the NDP. That's why we have a high jobless rate. It's why we have a high deficit. It's why we have a high debt. It's why we have disastrous energy policies—all aided and abetted by the NDP.

But the \$1.1-billion scandal with the gas plants in Oakville is exactly what the Ontario public is the most angry about. They can't understand why this Liberal government sat in its place for two years and said the cancellation was only \$40 million when that party over there knew for over two years that it would be over \$700 million, close to a billion dollars, which it finally rang into. They also can't understand why the Premier of the province handed over bargaining rights to TCE and why they obstructed the Information and Privacy Commissioner and chose the more expensive location. But we know that we are all on the hook for a \$1.1-billion tab.

Will the Liberals finally start to listen to the people of Ontario and seek a mandate from them?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member will know, speaking of the Oakville gas plant, that the Premier initiated the Auditor General. The Auditor General did her work. She came in and she provided a report.

Mr. Speaker, what is important is that we're moving forward. That's why we're taking action to ensure that electricity bills remain affordable for ratepayers:

- number one, the Clean Energy Benefit;

- most importantly, rescheduling the Samsung agreement, saving \$3.7 billion over the life of the contract;

- changing the domestic content rules in the feed-in tariff program, saving ratepayers more than \$1.9 billion over the life of the contracts;

—deferring the construction of two new nuclear reactors at Darlington generating station, avoiding an estimated \$15 billion in new construction costs.

These are decisions we made over the last seven or eight months. They're making a significant difference. We're pushing the cost curve down, and this member should get with the new agenda—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, only a party that has a \$12-billion deficit would say they're overachieving. Only a party that blew \$1 billion would have the audacity to look at the taxpayers and say they are saving them money.

This is a Premier who is leading her party and who has not been elected by the people. Amid this \$1.1-billion gas plant scandal, she has refused to call a judicial inquiry. She has refused to call a want of confidence motion. And her staff obstructed the Information and Privacy Commissioner, an officer of this assembly, from doing her job.

Stephanie Delorme, of Ottawa-Vanier, wrote to the Premier. She said: "My eight-year-old son was agog at the idea a billion dollars was spent, but nothing was constructed, nothing was gained...Even he concluded that a billion dollars could buy a lot of stuff for our communities."

"I am asking you to be more of a grown-up—more of a citizen than a politician—and have the guts to face your consequences. My eight-year-old—"

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Minister of Energy?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: That member should have the guts to deal with her leader's position on the gas plant. We have here a quote from Mayor Rob Burton.

"On October 5, 2011, on the day before the provincial election, in front of the still under construction Mississauga power plant, PC leader Tim Hudak promises to stop the power plant if he wins the election, after only days before warning that he's sure it 'may cost another \$1 billion.' Later, in 2013, he insists it was irresponsible for then-Premier McGuinty to have cancelled it 'without knowing what it would cost,' even though it cost far less than Hudak says he thinks it" would have cost when he himself promised to cancel it. "This is a new height in hypocrisy, even for him."

That's an exact quote, Mr.—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Regardless of whether he is reading or not, the member cannot say that. Withdraw.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Acting Premier. Ontarians want to see Ontario's books balanced in a responsible manner. The government signed a plan to open a new corporate tax loophole to help Ontario's large-

est corporations write off the HST on expenses like winning and dining of clients. Under pressure from the NDP, the government agreed this was a \$1.1-billion expense that Ontarians couldn't afford in tough times.

When will the government permanently close this loophole, or has it abandoned it altogether?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, we are absolutely committed to be responsible when it comes to managing the province's finances. In fact, last year, spending was down. Spending was down last year for the first time since 1996. On the health care file, we've gone from annual increases of 6% to 7% per year to 2% per year, and the health sector understands that that's the way it's going to be for the foreseeable future.

We are transforming how we're doing business so that we can actually be responsible fiscally and continue to improve services that people so heavily rely on. I think that if the member opposite actually paid attention to the books, he would understand that we're being extremely responsible. We're taking our responsibility seriously, but we're not going to cut services. We're not going to slash services.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Mr. Speaker, with the greatest of respect, I asked a sensible question. I got a whole bunch of stuff and nothing to do with my question at all. So I'm going to try a different tack; maybe you can answer this one.

Last fall, the government indicated that they were prepared to put a hard cap on public sector CEO salaries that have climbed into the seven-figure range. When will the government take that action, or is this yet another plan the Liberals plan to abandon?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: No, Speaker. In fact, we are looking at the issue of broader public sector executive compensation, because I think all of us understand that we need to have a responsible approach to executive compensation in the broader public sector. But I think the member opposite realizes that that is not a panacea; that is not the big fix. In fact, in the health care sector, the issue around hospital CEO compensation amounts to 0.03% of the budget. Yes, it's something we're looking at, but we're realistic enough to know that it's not going to fix everything.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: Again, no one says it's going to fix everything, but the Liberals promise things and don't deliver. I'll try a third tack.

Families have seen the government waste over a billion dollars scrapping private power deals. They blow millions on perks and excesses at Ornge and eHealth. They break promises of restraint at the top and dump billions of dollars more into new corporate tax loopholes that aren't creating jobs. Why should anyone take the government seriously when it comes to balancing Ontario's books?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, I think I would simply beg to differ with the member opposite

because, in fact, we are making great progress when it comes to jobs. We have done far better than recoup the losses that we had during the great recession. We're continuing to improve outcomes for the people in this province, whether it's health outcomes or whether it's educational outcomes.

1050

We're creating jobs. We're very focused on creating jobs. Our youth employment strategy has already demonstrated that with concerted effort, in partnership with broader society, we can put young people to work. We can put people to work because they're skilled and they're talented. We need to work together to get this economy really moving, to benefit all of us.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Acting Premier. For more than 10 years, Liberals have been cutting no-strings-attached blank cheques to businesses that aren't creating jobs. Does the Acting Premier still think no-strings-attached giveaways are the way to create jobs?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have been in a position to support business in this province, because that is where jobs are created. We are prepared to work with the business community so they can create more jobs for the people of this province.

I think we have seen some excellent success when it comes to our investment in GM, for example. There are other very good examples of success, and I think the member actually knows that, because she lives in a community that has benefited from those investments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: To the Acting Premier: Actually, the region of Kitchener–Waterloo is successful in spite of this government.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order. Thank you.

Carry on.

Ms. Catherine Fife: In 2011, Navistar in Chatham shut its doors, and 1,000 people lost their jobs. This government cut Navistar a \$30-million cheque, but apparently didn't get a guarantee to keep jobs in Ontario. Navistar moved those jobs to a state with a job creator tax credit, something proposed by New Democrats.

Later this month, there is going to be an auction at the Navistar plant. Will Ontarians get any of that \$30 million back?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm happy to have the opportunity to talk about some of the investments through the southwestern Ontario economic development fund, some of them very close to the member opposite's hometown.

Let's talk about what's happening in Elmira. Elmira Pet Products got a grant and created 25 jobs and retained another 146 jobs, for a total of 171.

Linamar in Guelph received a grant; 51 new jobs were created and they retained 374. In Palmerston, \$250,000

went to MSW Canadian Plastics Inc.; they created nine new jobs and retained 21 jobs. In Woodstock, NASG Canada created 50 jobs and retained 210.

This investment is working and creating jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Another non-answer. People are ready to hear new promises today, but they also remember this government's track record. Over the last 10 years, 300,000 good manufacturing jobs have disappeared. Our province has the highest electricity rates in the country, the lowest productivity growth and an unemployment rate that is above the national average.

The government says their old jobs plan is working, even while they try and roll out a new one. Are Ontarians ever going to hear a credible jobs plan from this government?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I don't know why the member opposite is so darned negative. Let me tell you that we acknowledge the economy still faces challenges. We know that. But she might want to know that employment is up by 475,600 jobs since our low in June 2009. We are on the right track. We are creating jobs; we are retaining jobs.

We believe in the people of this province. We believe they are talented people. We're going to continue to work with the people of this province, because we believe that that's the strength of our future.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Acting Premier. We've heard testimony at the justice committee from the auditor and from senior officials in the Ontario Power Authority that your government was made aware of the costs of the Oakville power plant cancellation months before the Premier appeared before the committee.

Your claims to not have known simply aren't credible. Cabinet was made aware and the Premier was made aware. She knew that the costs were going to be in the hundreds of millions of dollars, but that's not what she told the public and that's not what she told this House. Yesterday afternoon, we debated a motion that gave all members of this House an opportunity to hold her accountable for her actions, and the NDP sat on their hands.

My question to the Acting Premier is simply this: What secret deal have you made with the NDP to buy their silence?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. This is skating on very thin ice when you pose a question in a manner that impugns whether or not somebody is paying somebody. So I'm going to offer you an opportunity to resist any further reference to such.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The temptation is there with the ridiculous question that's just been asked, and I'm not going to fall for it because, you know what, Mr. Speaker? This is serious. It is very serious that the opposition, over the past several months, has stood up day after day after day, outlining the situation with the gas plants as being one of the most serious issues before the province, and yet they fail to acknowledge the fact that in the last election they were the ones out front—their candidates—their leader was saying that the only way to see the gas plants cancelled is to elect a PC government in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, it is time they came clean. The issues the member raised this morning have all been dealt with at committee. The Premier will go in front of committee. But the one issue that has not been raised is their commitment to cancel the plants, their costing and their analysis, and it's time they came clean. This is a very serious issue, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the Acting Premier: We know that the Liberals are willing to do anything to cling to power, and the NDP are steadfast in their commitment to prop them up. If the Premier can be allowed to waste over \$1 billion without any consequences, what is to prevent even greater scandals from happening in the future? You've had nine months, and all you've done is attempt to get back that union support. Today's economic plan, your so-called jobs plan, proves you're doing everything you can to get that union support back from the NDP. Rumour has it that donations to the Liberals are up and donations to the NDP are down.

This government is responsible for scandal after scandal and will excuse itself for doing anything. The Premier has held no one accountable, and yesterday the NDP turned their backs on Ontarians by refusing to hold the Premier accountable. When will you finally do the right thing and let the people of Ontario pass their judgment on this corrupt, tired old government?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

The member will withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we have tried, with some success, to make this government work. It is true that we brought forward a budget. We reached out to both parties—the PC Party refused to even read the budget, but yes, we reached an agreement with the New Democratic Party. In terms of the PC Party, quite recently we had a programming motion passed in this Legislature which allowed a number of very important pieces of legislation to move forward through committee and through to third reading.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to make this Legislature work, but I ask the honourable members opposite to

continue to show willingness. Right now, Bill 105, which is going to cut taxes for small business, is stalled in committee because of the machinations of the opposition.

Let's continue that spirit of co-operation. Let's continue to make this Legislature work.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Acting Premier. The people of Windsor and Essex county have faced terrible uncertainty and anxiety when it comes to access to cancer surgery as well as thoracic services in our home community.

New Democrats have been asking for clarity and assurance from this government for a full week, but all we're hearing from the minister is spin. She has made it clear that she no longer wants Windsor to provide thoracic services, but the member from Windsor West has been evading the issue and implying that she supports thoracic services in Windsor. So can the Acting Premier come clean and tell us what the Liberal government's position is on Windsor's thoracic services today?

1100

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure the people of Windsor that they will continue to have access to first-class cancer services, and anything suggesting that they won't is simply fearmongering. They will receive those services in Windsor.

The member from Windsor West and I actually met this morning with Michael Sherar, the CEO of Cancer Care Ontario, so that we could have a further conversation about this particular situation. I think it's commendable that the member from Windsor West would take the time to understand the issue, to advocate for her community, and her commitment to quality of care is paramount.

We know that there is a relationship between volume of surgeries and quality of care. Cancer Care Ontario has driven quality improvement in cancer care that has benefited all Ontarians, and we'll continue to work on this issue.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: This government is all too happy to put out contradictory statements and to provide empty assurances, but the grim reality of the situation continues. Windsor and Essex county residents are faced with the loss of thoracic services under the threat of losing all cancer surgeries. Just yesterday, the CEO of Windsor Regional Hospital told the media that the threat from Cancer Care Ontario has yet to be withdrawn, and the hospital's concerns about the loss of thoracic services have not been addressed either.

So will the Acting Premier let my constituents know if her government is done playing games and is ready to take action to protect Windsor's health care services?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Absolutely, Speaker. I am committed to excellent care for the people of Windsor and area, as I am for every other part of this province. I think it's very important that the member opposite understand that the \$6 million-plus that is received by the

Windsor hospitals from Cancer Care Ontario will continue. That funding will continue because people in Windsor and area count on that funding to get the cancer care that they need.

So we are continuing, as I said, to work on the issues specific to one type of surgery, but cancer care services will absolutely continue in Windsor, and for the member opposite to suggest otherwise is simply irresponsible.

EDUCATION

Mr. John Fraser: My question is to the Minister of Education. I know that Ontario's publicly funded education system is recognized as one of the best in the world, and I'm extremely proud of our accomplishments, as our success is based on the talent, dedication and hard work of those in our education community.

We have a lot to be proud of. Today, 71% of students are achieving the provincial standards in grades 3 and 6 combined, which is up 17 points from 54% in 2002-03, and graduation rates are up 15 points from 2003, to 83% in 2013.

While we have seen great progress over the last 10 years, I know we can't become complacent with this success. I was pleased to hear that the minister recently visited Ottawa to talk about the next phase of education in our province. Can the minister please update this House on the consultations you have been holding?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member from Ottawa South for raising this initiative. We do have a lot to be proud of when it comes to our accomplishments in education, and now is the time to build on that success and redefine our vision, aspirations and our goals, not just for the system but, more importantly, for our students.

I was pleased to be able to travel to Ottawa recently to participate in our provincial consultation on how to take our education system from great to excellent. I've also had the pleasure of travelling to Thunder Bay, Sudbury, London, Richmond Hill and Mississauga recently to hear directly from parents and our partners in education.

We're asking questions about: What skills do students need to thrive in the 21st century? How do we support student well-being? How can we make better use of technology in our schools? And we have a host of more questions that will help direct our vision for education in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you to the minister for bringing us up to speed on the next phase of consultations.

I agree that it is important for us to continue to look forward on how we can take our system from great to excellent. We are already recognized globally as having one of the best publicly funded education systems in the English-speaking world. We need to continue to work and strive for the best for our students.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister describe to this House what she hopes to learn from these consulta-

tions and when we will finalize this next phase for education in Ontario?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you again for the question. It's important to note that this consultation has been a broader check-in than just with our usual education stakeholders. We've been talking, as well, to business, to chambers of commerce, to non-profit agencies and communities throughout the province, and to our students and to our parents. We're talking about how to improve in areas like critical thinking, creativity, problem solving and communication skills, all skills you need for a variety of jobs in our province. We're talking about whether we should be teaching students more about entrepreneurship and financial literacy—what does that mean? What's the role of technology in our classrooms of the future? So this really is a broad range of topics, with a whole host of people from every community.

We are looking forward to the release of a new vision early in 2014.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games. Minister, yesterday in estimates committee, I asked your colleague the Minister of Transportation when we could expect to see the transit plan for the Pan Am Games. I have to say, his response was quite interesting. Your colleague said that we might get the plan in the next few weeks, but they won't really have a clear picture of the costs until the games are finished. That begs the question: Why even have a budget? If your strategy for the Pan Am Games is just to endlessly bill the taxpayers, why even make the budget? The sad thing is, given the Minister of Transportation's comments and your record, whatever numbers come out of the Pan Am Games transit plan will have no credibility.

Minister, do you agree with the Minister of Transportation? Do you also have no clue what the Pan Am Games transit plans are going to cost?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question. As you know, the Pan Am Games are a huge undertaking by the province. Come 2015, there will be 41 countries' competitors coming to Toronto. The games will attract, according to the CIBC, about 350,000 tourists coming to our town.

The Minister of Transportation and TO2015 are leading the development of an integrated transportation plan for the games. Transportation planning for an event of this scale is complex. It takes time and involves many organizations, including the province, municipalities, transit systems and security planning. We are working very closely with the OPP and municipal police to ensure that transportation will be safe and secure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games as well. Minister, you can't keep using complexity as an excuse for not having a budget. It's precisely why you need a budget. Even

your own colleague seemed to throw you under the bus for the Pan Am transportation budget, in estimates yesterday. Apparently, you won't have transportation costs figured out until after the games—very perplexing.

Let me remind you: The value of having a real budget ahead of time is to ensure that the people who are paying for the games are being respected, and that you're being accountable. Therein lies the second problem, Minister: None of your Pan Am budgeting to date is credible. Any time you need more money, you just bury it in another ministry. Your game of misdirection is over.

I want to know how much is buried in transportation and in any other ministry. Minister, will the Pan Am transportation plan be another hidden extra, above and beyond the \$1.4-billion decoy Pan Am budget?

Hon. Michael Chan: The transportation master plan that will guide our operations as we prepare for the games is on track. Past games have reviewed their transportation plans 12 to 18 months before they are under way, and we plan to match that timeline.

We are also working together on an integrated stakeholder outreach and engagement plan, which will be used to guide transportation-related communications to all stakeholders.

1110

Transportation costs have not been fully defined. The games are the first time the province has undertaken a transportation planning exercise of this magnitude. The costs will be identified as the transportation planning process is completed and the full scope of the transportation needs is better understood.

NUCLEAR WASTE

Mr. Jonah Schein: My question is to the Acting Premier. Nuclear officials are preparing to transport a toxic stew of liquid bomb-grade uranium by armed convoy from Chalk River, Ontario, to a South Carolina reprocessing site. This so-called high-priority mission marks the first time that authorities have attempted to truck highly enriched uranium in a liquid solution.

This announcement has alarmed nuclear safety groups on both sides of the border, and they're sounding the alarm for far greater government scrutiny. What safeguards has this government put in place to protect Ontario residents from this potentially dangerous practice?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member will know that nuclear safety is the responsibility of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. It is 100% responsible. It provides the oversight and accepts the responsibility for it. We work very closely with that agency when we're asked to, and the member should know that.

He's raising concerns. I will pass those concerns on to my federal counterpart. I'm sure, like in every other case when the NDP has raised concerns about the transportation of nuclear products, that they have been properly dealt with and no incidents have occurred from them. The record is impeccable, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jonah Schein: Back to the Acting Premier: This government has to understand that there are grave public safety issues at stake here, and the trucking of nuclear waste through our communities requires proper government oversight.

In August, a truck with radioactive cargo on the busy I-75 highway near Troy, Ohio, caught fire, but despite the fire emergency, nuclear regulators in Canada, where the cargo originated, and in the US were not informed of the incident.

Will this government provide hard evidence that the transport of liquid uranium poses no danger to the public and ensure that local officials are given advance notification of the transport of nuclear waste through their region?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Nuclear safety is a top priority for Ontario, and it has been for the 40 or 50 years that we've been in the business. Nuclear power has been safely providing electricity in the province for 40 years. Most importantly, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and Transport Canada are responsible for issuing transport licence applications related to nuclear materials in accordance with stringent regulations for compliance in connection with public safety and emergency preparedness.

As the federal regulator, the CNSC would not allow the transportation of any equipment or material if they were a risk to the public or the environment. The type of incident he's referring to in the United States has not occurred in Ontario, and it won't, Mr. Speaker.

ELDER ABUSE

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Ma question est pour le ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, l'honorable Mario Sergio.

It's my view, as I meet more and more of my constituents in Etobicoke North, that the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat will have an ever-expanding mandate. Unfortunately, in the society that we live in, this more and more often involves elder abuse—mental, physical, even financial.

The WHO defines abuse of older adults as "a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring in any relationship where there's an expectation of trust that causes harm or distress to an older person."

The reality is this: Seniors are often the victims of fraud. They tend to be trusting and generous individuals, which of course can make them prey to fraudsters.

Given the minister's role at the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat, I would like to know personally and I would like Ontarians to know what actions our government is taking to protect our seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Je suis très heureux de répondre à la question de mon collègue le membre d'Etobicoke-Nord.

Indeed, it's very timely that this question comes at this particular time. Our seniors are not only trusting and

generous but very giving as well. I have to say that, thanks to the contributions they have made, our country, our province and our communities are much better off today.

Shielding, safeguarding and protecting our seniors is my responsibility and that of the government and every member of the House. We introduced legislation to combat elder abuse, to raise awareness and to educate as well. We've injected more than \$8 million since 2003, including the bill of rights for seniors and zero tolerance as well. More than that, let me say that in the next few days, on November 11, we have an extra reason to remember our seniors: those brave men and women who fought in the Second World War and the Korean War so we can enjoy our freedom today.

When it comes to our seniors, we can never do enough. We will continue to do everything we can for the safety and protection of our seniors.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I appreciate the response, diligence and heartfelt commitment of the minister in this portfolio.

As a physician and parliamentarian, I am seeing more and more elder abuse in my various capacities. I believe that for my riding of Etobicoke North, there is, however, a certain degree of reassurance to know that the province understands the importance of combatting elder abuse and that the machinery of government is mobilized in this regard. Seniors—their contribution, their hard work, their collective wisdom are all precious resources.

Even so, sadly, many seniors are taken advantage of financially even by their own family members. How is Ontario working with other Canadian jurisdictions to alert seniors about financial fraud, whether it comes from friend or foe?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I have to say that the member from Etobicoke North is a real champion and he's a remarkable member when it comes to our seniors. I have to say that the question couldn't come at a better time, when we are celebrating National Senior Safety Week throughout Canada. The theme, in fact, is, fight fraud and protect our seniors' finances.

I have to say that a couple of weeks ago I had the pleasure of participating with members from all the federal, provincial and territorial ministries with respect to raising the issues of seniors. I am very proud, as an Ontarian and a minister of the province of Ontario, to bring forth to the table and get approved a brochure with respect to powers of attorney and joint bank accounts.

I have to say that when it comes to our seniors in the province of Ontario: Here, there are no boundaries. I hope that goes for every member of the House.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, tomorrow will be the 10th day since you promised to respond to Kimm Fletcher about the crisis that she and her family face. That means that

another 10% of her medically predicted life expectancy has gone by while you have continued to do nothing.

Minister, yours is a sacred trust, one that you choose to ignore when it comes to highly vulnerable individuals like Kimm, who look to you as their last resort and their court of final appeal. So today I'm taking the matter directly to the people of Ontario and I'm issuing a province-wide petition on Kimm's behalf. The question is, Minister, will you at least now act on that sacred trust and respond to the voice and the will of the people of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure the member opposite and everyone else in this province that I take my responsibility as Minister of Health extremely seriously. I know that people are counting on me to do my job well so they can get the health care they need when they need it.

Interjection.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite continues to heckle. I find that disgusting, frankly.

I think it's important that the member opposite understands that when it comes to funding cancer drugs, we have tripled funding for cancer-fighting drugs. For every \$1 they spend, we are spending \$3.

We are blessed in this province to have excellent cancer care. We have amongst the highest survival rates in the world. We have those results because we rely on science to make our decisions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: That increased spending isn't helping Kimm, is it?

Minister, the petition I'm releasing today concludes:

"That the Ontario Parliament call on the Premier and the Minister of Health to extend OHIP funding of the drug Avastin, so that Kimm Fletcher, and others like her, can have as much time to enjoy with her family as possible and to tell the Wynne administration that our health care system includes Kimm Fletcher."

Again, I ask you, Minister, why doesn't your health care system include Kimm Fletcher?

1120

Hon. Deborah Matthews: In my health care system, people get access to the drugs they need based on their condition, not based on an MPP they might know. We apply the same rules to everyone. To single out one individual for exceptional access is not consistent with my commitment to provide excellent care to all Ontarians.

We rely on science. We rely on evidence. The members opposite have chosen to disregard evidence, to disregard science. I think that is wrong. I believe, because I do feel that I am put in a position of enormous responsibility, that I must rely on evidence so that we can get people the care they need, the care that will help them.

CATARACT SURGERY

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Seniors in the London area are facing unacceptable wait times for cataract surgery. My constituents are writing me, as surely as they

are writing the Minister of Health, in distress. Because of the year-long wait times for this—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Whom to, please?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Oh, my apologies. The Minister of Health. She's been getting a lot of questions; I just forgot to introduce her. Do you want me to start again, Speaker? No? Okay.

My constituents have been writing me, Minister, as surely as they have been writing you, in distress because of the year-long wait times for this necessary surgery. Ophthalmologists warned this government that problems were brewing, and the Liberal government chose to ignore their concerns. Now seniors are paying the price. Does the health minister think it is right that seniors needing cataract surgery are forced to wait for a year or longer in her own hometown riding?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I welcome this question because this party has a very strong record when it comes to focusing on getting wait times down. In fact, we have recently—for the sixth year in a row—received straight As from the Wait Time Alliance. Our wait times are lower than anywhere else. We've made great progress. Province-wide, we've cut five months off wait times for cataract surgeries. In the South West LHIN, when we took office, people were waiting 351 days; they were waiting a full year for that surgery. We have cut that wait time in half. Across the province, we have reduced wait times for cataracts. We've reduced wait times for various surgeries and diagnostic tests. We're very transparent about it. You can go online and see what wait times are for any procedures in any hospital in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Living with reduced eyesight can impact every aspect of someone's life. One constituent wrote about this year-long wait time, "This is unacceptable as my quality of life as a senior is grossly affected. I have problems with glare and this may affect my driving. This not only affects me, but also my immediate family as I may not be able to pick up my grandchildren after school, which will cost my daughter for after-school care."

The Minister of Health seems more concerned with patting herself on the back than taking the concerns of our constituents seriously. Speaker, my question is simple: Can the minister tell my constituents when cataract wait times will be reduced?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: For all of the reasons that were mentioned in that letter, that is why we have really focused on bringing wait times down for cataracts. Across the province, wait times are down significantly. We were the first ones to actually measure, publicly post, publicly report and invest money to bring those wait times down. We have seen tremendous success.

In fact, I bet the member opposite would be interested in knowing our wait time success in other procedures: 98% of cancer procedures are being done within the priority level for targets, 100% of bypass surgeries, 94% of cataract surgeries, 89% of hip replacements, 85% of

knee replacements, 61% of MRIs, 87% of CTs, 98% of general surgeries and 92% of pediatric surgeries. Wait times are a big focus of our ministry, and we're seeing the results.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, in my riding of Ottawa-Orléans I often meet and listen to families, as do all members of this House. One concern that I hear frequently from parents is that they want to know that the right services are in place for their child's development. This is a universal concern, and I know that in Ontario we're providing some of the best supports available anywhere in the world.

As a parent and grandparent myself, I know that these types of services make positive impacts in the lives of children. My question is, Mr. Speaker: Can the minister please tell this House what we are doing as a government to help children grow up to be healthy teenagers and then healthy adults?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you to the member from Ottawa-Orléans for this question. First off, there are a number of children in here. Welcome to all the children visiting us here today, and it's for you that this question is very important.

I'm a parent as well, as everyone knows, and nothing is more important to me—and I think everyone in this House—to make sure that children are prepared for school and life. I can say that there are many more programs available today than there were when my kids were young. My ministry is investing \$261 million in healthy development, services and supports directly for children and their parents. For example, we're providing the Healthy Babies Healthy Children Program with \$89 million. This program supports women, children and their families, from the prenatal period through to a child's transition to school.

Through programs like this, our government is able to directly assist in the healthy development of our young people. This is part of our government's commitment to provide children with the best possible start in life.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I would like to thank the minister for her answer. It's very clear to me that this government takes the responsibility of healthy childhood development seriously. It is making significant investments. However, this is an area where there's always improvement to be made. As a government, we need to be constantly looking to improve the services we provide and also seek out new and better methods.

I understand that in March of this year, the Healthy Kids Panel released a report with recommendations to improve healthy childhood development—specifically, reduce childhood obesity. I'm pleased that our government established this panel to help combat such an important issue. Can the minister please tell this House more about this report and how our government is responding?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Again, thank you for the follow-up question.

First, I'd like to thank the Healthy Kids Panel for their report, which aims to improve health and well-being. The report made a number of recommendations on some important Ministry of Children and Youth Services programs, as well as recommendations across government. These include our Poverty Reduction Strategy, Student Nutrition Program and the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy—all strategies that we are investing in.

We're committed to reviewing the recommendations in order to inform our future. In fact, Speaker, Minister Matthews and I are co-chairing the working group on the Healthy Kids Panel report to review each of those recommendations. That group will be extremely important to move towards this government's goal to improve early childhood development services.

Again, we're committed to working with our colleagues across ministries to inform our next steps.

ENERGY RATES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, I'm sending these energy bills to you and I'd appreciate you taking a look at them, and I'll leave them with page Sarhan. Thank you.

Minister, earlier this week, I met with a business owner from my riding who showed me his massive energy bills. Most notably, his global adjustment has skyrocketed. If you look at his bills, you'll notice that he is using less power than two years ago but paying much more, and his global adjustment has almost tripled.

Another business owner told me that he "is considering leaving Ontario and moving to the Detroit area, where he can get cheaper rent and his energy costs would be half of what they currently are," taking jobs and tax revenue from my community. Minister, my question is simply this: If you were in my shoes, what would you tell these business owners?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would tell those owners that we have made significant investments in the energy system because of the negligence of that party when they were in government, requiring us to spend \$21 billion on new generation and \$10 billion on new transmission, and that pushed electricity rates up. As a result of those rates going up—investments which were absolutely necessary to create a reliable and clean system—we created a number of programs for the energy sector, including the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit for families and for industry—and that includes small business and farmers—the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, the Northern Ontario Energy Credit, the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program, the industrial conservation initiative and the industrial electricity incentive.

1130

In addition to that, over the last seven or eight months, we've taken major steps to put pressure—to put prices down, and that included about—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Minister, actions do speak louder than words, and I really hope that you're not misleading Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Withdraw.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I withdraw.

Minister, my riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex has lost over 10,000 manufacturing jobs since this government took office in 2003, and we cannot afford to lose any more.

You tell turbine companies not to produce energy while you continue to pay them for not producing energy. All the while, more and more turbines continue to be built up, not only in my riding but throughout Ontario.

Here's the reality, Minister: Energy costs are doubling and crippling manufacturing. Businesses and families are struggling to pay bills and keep their lights on.

Admit that your Green Energy Act is a failure. Minister, will you admit that you do not have a real plan to lower energy rates—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: [*Inaudible*], and as I said earlier today in question period, by renegotiating the Samsung agreement, we saved ratepayers \$3.7 billion over the life of the contract. By changing the domestic content rules for the feed-in tariff program, we saved ratepayers more than \$1.9 billion over the life of the contracts. Deferring the construction of two nuclear reactors at Darlington generating station is avoiding an estimated \$15 billion in new construction. All of those would have put pressure on costs going up. These are going to put the right pressure on our investments to push costs down.

We will be releasing our long-term energy plan within several weeks, and I ask the member to await that and he'll see exactly what the future holds for us.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Sarah Campbell: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Grassy Narrows First Nation was not consulted in good faith when the long-term management direction of the Whiskey Jack Forest on their traditional land was developed. MNR plans show that clear-cutting on traditionally Grassy Narrows territory will start as early as 2014, despite the community's strong objections.

In 2012, Premier Wynne visited Grassy Narrows as Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and talked about rebuilding Grassy Narrows's relationship with Ontario to get it right, yet the exact opposite is happening.

Will the minister uphold his duty, do the right thing and consult with Grassy Narrows to obtain their consent regarding any forestry plans on their traditional lands?

Hon. David Orazietti: I certainly appreciate the question from the member. We obviously are very con-

cerned about the participation of First Nations in the forestry industry and their activity.

The member knows full well that there is a court challenge that is going to the Supreme Court as a result of the province being successful in a case that took place earlier with respect to the province having the right to be able to issue harvesting licences in the area.

We are certainly committed to working with the Grassy Narrows First Nation. We value their involvement and their participation in forest harvesting. As the member knows as well, wood from the Whiskey Jack continues to provide economic opportunities for First Nation communities as well as the local mills, also including a mill that is owned and operated by a local First Nation member.

Under the contingency plan, there are no planned harvest blocks located within the Grassy Narrows self-identified traditional lands, but we are very mindful of this issue and are committed to working with the Grassy Narrows First Nation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: This Liberal government's disregard for the consultation process is causing serious problems with economic development, in addition to endangering this province's relationship with First Nations.

Grassy Narrows believes that MNR officers are interfering with their community members as they go about performing their regular traditional activities on their traditional land, instead of engaging in real consultation.

Will this government commit today to coming to the table, engaging with Grassy Narrows in serious consultation and obtaining their consent when it comes to activities within their traditional territory?

Hon. David Orazietti: Nothing could be further from the truth. Our government is committed to participating and working actively with First Nations in this area with respect to the Whiskey Jack Forest, as well as the Grassy Narrows First Nation.

The member also knows that wood that comes off the Whiskey Jack SFL goes to support a mill that is owned and operated by a local First Nation member, and that the 10-year Crown Forest Sustainability Act, as well as the forest licence management plan that is actively being undertaken, are inclusive of First Nations' interests and rights.

We are very concerned, and we are very actively working with the First Nations to ensure their participation in this area that is so vital to their livelihood. I'd say to the member opposite, we're going to continue to do that.

We have a strong relationship in working with our First Nations, a strong partnership with First Nations. I'm certainly very pleased at the progress that we've made.

LEGAL AID

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is to the Attorney General. Legal Aid Ontario plays a vital role in providing access to justice throughout the province by providing high-quality legal aid services in a cost-effective and

efficient manner. Too many constituents who are in need of legal advice find that it can be very costly, and that may deter them from seeking appropriate legal advice.

In the most recent budget, our government made a commitment to expand funding to Legal Aid Ontario. Can the Attorney General please share how this new funding will expand services and how it may expand access to justice for low-income Ontarians and some of the more vulnerable citizens?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you very much for the question. It's unfortunate there won't be enough time for a supplementary because this is a good-news story.

I'm happy to tell you that our government, this year, has committed \$30 million in extra funding over the next three years for Legal Aid Ontario, with a specific emphasis on family law services and legal aid clinics. That's in addition to \$150 million that was given over four years, back in 2009.

The unfortunate part is that whereas at one time legal aid was the joint responsibility of the federal and provincial government and the funding was on a 50-50 basis, currently we're only getting 20% of the total funding from the federal government. Next week, there will be meetings with other provincial and territorial ministers, as well as the Minister of Justice, and this is certainly one issue that we'll be addressing with him at that point in time, because access to justice, whether it's in the criminal courts, the civil courts or Family Court, is absolutely essential if we want to have a good system of justice in the province of Ontario.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the minister responsible for the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games concerning the games' transit plan. This matter will be debated Tuesday, November 19, at 6 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My dear friends, this is the last day for our pages, and we wish them well.
Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do believe they've done a tremendous job. They do us proud, and they do their families proud as well.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: This morning I had the pleasure of introducing David Tanovich, the father of page Evan. This afternoon, it gives me great pleasure to introduce

10-year-old Nicholas and eight-year-old Mara Tanovich, the brother and sister of Evan, as well. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to welcome a number of representatives from the high-tech world and the world of venture capital who are here from the great riding of Kitchener Centre: John Baker, the CEO of Desire2Learn, and Iain Klugman, the CEO of Communitech. They're joined by John Ruffolo and Michael Nobrega from OMERS.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Premier, if nobody else is, I would love to introduce Mayor Hazel McCallion, my hero.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome, Your Worship.

As is the tradition of the Speaker, we have with us, in the east members' gallery, representing Scarborough-Agincourt in the 35th to 39th Parliaments, Mr. Gerry Phillips.

The member from Ajax-Pickering.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Where Gerry Phillips lives, Mr. Speaker.

I have a class from Duffin's Bay in Ajax on their way here. We took their picture on the staircase. Their teacher is Debby Morrissey. If you welcome them and lead the charge when they come in, that would be appreciated, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, I will.

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to welcome the family of the Minister of Finance. His wife, his father and his sister-in-law, I believe, are here at the House, so I want to welcome them. I also know that my good friend Richmond Hill Councillor Godwin Chan is here, joining us at the House. Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to bring a matter of great concern to the attention of the Minister of Health. My constituents Walter and Wilma Smith's rising medical costs are making it difficult for them to make ends meet.

The Smiths have been together for nearly 62 years, and throughout that time they had managed to create a successful life together—that is, until now. Today, they are barely surviving. Sadly, Mrs. Smith was diagnosed with cancer two years ago. After having successfully undergone treatment, she was left dependent on a colostomy bag. She now requires \$1,300 worth of medical supplies each year. While she and her husband are grateful for the Assistive Devices Program, which grants them \$600 per year, it is simply not enough, covering less than six months' worth of supplies.

Much like the majority of retired seniors in Ontario, Mr. and Mrs. Smith rely entirely on their pensions. Every cent that comes into their home is immediately dedicated

to their bills and medical supplies. They have even been forced to mortgage their home. Minister, this couple is in their 80s. Mr. and Mrs. Smith have no choice but to live very frugally.

The once cheerful and sweet couple have become tired, frustrated and disenchanted with this government that continues to do nothing but introduce more taxes to pay for their many scandals while seniors are paying the price. The Smiths, like many other struggling Ontarians, want to know why the government is not doing more. This government was elected to help the people of Ontario, and it's high time they started doing that.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Communities across my riding of Kenora-Rainy River have been grappling with an affordable and supportive housing crisis for a number of years, and recently the situation has become dire for those living in the Kenora area who are homeless. Recently, due to rising deficits and a change in the provincial funding formula, the Kenora Fellowship Centre, the city's only emergency shelter, has announced that it is forced to start charging homeless people money to stay overnight.

In northwestern Ontario, winters can be cold and harsh, with winter temperatures averaging minus 25 to minus 35 degrees Celsius without factoring in the wind chill. Just where does this government expect people to stay during the long winter nights during these frigid months? Well, I'll tell you where some of these people are forced to stay. Some, who are sadly the fortunate ones in this situation, are forced to sleep outside in tents because they can't afford the \$15-a-night charge at the emergency shelter. I can see that this isn't a priority for the members on the government side, who can't even be bothered to listen to the serious problems that we're facing in Kenora.

We can't blame the Kenora Fellowship Centre for doing the best that they can and for trying to make this seemingly impossible choice between keeping the lights on and helping some or being forced to close down permanently due to a lack of funding.

The real problem lies with the province for three reasons, Speaker: There is a profound lack of affordable and supportive housing units in my riding; woefully inadequate funding for emergency shelters that have already been forced to close, such as the emergency shelter in Red Lake; and changes need to be made to the ODSP that reflect the precarious living situation of people who find themselves homeless.

This is a very serious issue, and this government needs to get serious about protecting the most vulnerable people in our society.

VETERANS

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Today I rise in recognition of those women and men who have served and continue to

serve as members of our Canadian Armed Forces. Every year, on November 11, we honour and pay tribute to their courage, their tenacity and their dedication. We also thank them for their sacrifices, without which we would not have the freedoms that we enjoy today as Ontarians. These include veterans like John Thompson from my riding of Vaughan, who flew over 100 missions with the Royal Air Force in World War II. He and so many others like him showed tremendous bravery in the face of horrific circumstances.

Vaughan is also home to its own Royal Canadian Legion, Mackenzie Branch 414, which is led by president Jane Lowe. This organization, like others around the province, helps support veterans in my community and also sponsors groups like the Royal Canadian Air Cadets, squadron 283. They will be hosting a Remembrance Day parade and ceremony on Monday, and I encourage everyone in my community to attend to mark the contribution that our veterans have made for our benefit.

As I've said, Canadian soldiers have made great sacrifices for our communities, for our province and for our nation. It is only fitting that we gather together to remember and to say thank you to those who gave all of us so very much.

BRITISH HOME CHILD DAY

Mr. Jim McDonell: Three years ago, this Legislature unanimously proclaimed September 28 as British Home Child Day here in Ontario. My colleague MPP Steve Clark co-sponsored that bill with former MPP Jim Brownell of my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. On that date, we recognize and honour the contributions of the British home children, who were part of the child migration movement that sent poor and orphaned British children to work in the colonies to seek a better life.

Our military history is a great source of pride to us Canadians, and the contributions to its success by the British home children were significant. Claude Nunney, at the age of 14, was placed at the home of Mrs. Donald Roy McDonald of North Lancaster in my riding. Claude later joined the 59th Stormont and Glengarry Regiment in June 1913 and was deployed to France as part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

For most conspicuous bravery during operations against the Drocourt-Quéant Line on September 1 and 2, 1918, Claude Nunney was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and the Military Medal, and for his services in France, he was awarded the Victoria Cross. I understand that he is the only Canadian to have received all three of these medals.

Claude Nunney died of his wounds in September 1918.

1310

This Remembrance Day, the Ontario East British Home Child Family will be, for the first time, laying a wreath at the National War Memorial in Ottawa in remembrance of the many British home children, like Claude Nunney, whose contributions and sacrifices allowed us to enjoy the freedoms we have today.

HYDRO INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to bring to the attention of the House an issue that's happening—specifically the Minister of Energy.

We know now, as a result of some discussions between Hydro One and snowmobile clubs across northern Ontario, that hydro is moving in order to get snowmobile clubs to not put their trails on the right-of-ways. You can imagine what that means for snowmobiling across northern Ontario. A lot of trails are along right-of-ways of Ontario hydro lines.

I say to the minister, if he could look into this, that we need to find a way, yes, to make sure that the liabilities for hydro are done so that they're not exposed. But I've got to say, the idea that they're going to start moving people off hydro lines and they're going to start charging people, if it's in a municipality, for 50% of the municipal tax and to fence the areas and provide 24-hour security is exorbitant and, quite frankly, is going to put snowmobile clubs out of business.

I say to the Minister of Energy, or to the Minister of Infrastructure and renewal: It's something that you'll be able to look into, to make sure that snowmobilers this winter can keep on the trails that they've got now, and that we find some sort of resolution so snowmobilers are able to use those trails and Hydro One is able to protect itself from any liability that it thinks it may have.

ANGUS MACKAY WILSON

Mr. Phil McNeely: As Remembrance Day approaches and Canadians everywhere remember the sacrifices of our brave soldiers, past and present, I wish to honour the memory of Angus Mackay Wilson, who passed away in August this year.

Angus, whom I was proud to have known well, was a World War II veteran, a long-time resident of Cumberland village and a community leader.

In 1941, Angus, like many other young men at the time, answered the call to arms and joined the Canadian Army. During the war, he courageously served as a signalman with the Royal Westminster Regiment during the Italian campaign. This regiment has since become known for its outstanding record of never having failed a mission during the war.

Post-war, he and his wife, Alice, another veteran—from the Wrens—settled down in Cumberland, where they raised their three children.

Cairine Wilson, Angus's mother, from my home village of Cumberland, was the first female senator in all of Canada.

Angus lived his life as an engaged community member, holding various leadership roles on the village council, on the school board, at his church and at the local historical society, and he made the best maple syrup in the whole area. He remained active in the community up to his 90th year.

It is for these lifelong achievements that the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and I recognized

Angus's record with a Queen's Diamond Jubilee medal at a joint ceremony just last year.

Remembrance Day is a special time of year when we remember all those ordinary citizens like Angus who stepped up when their country needed them and put their lives on the line so that we could all enjoy freedom.

I stand here today to say thank you to all those who have served and sacrificed so much for our great country.

Nous nous souviendrons.

FARM FAMILY OF THE YEAR

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise today and congratulate an outstanding Caledon family as they are recognized as the Farm Family of the Year by the Peel Federation of Agriculture.

The Davis family is a wonderful example of a farm family that deserves the recognition of our agricultural community. Davis Feed and Farm Supply has been in business for nearly 25 years. The Davis family began in the dairy and horse feed business to provide a local, affordable option to farmers needing feed, and the company has grown every year since. Davis Feed and Farm Supply now offers produce and pet supplies in addition to feed, and also boasts an excellent garden centre. The 25-acre field filled with sunflowers that are grown for their own birdseed is an amazing sight to see in the fall.

I applaud the Davis family for their impressive contributions and outreach within our community, as they support and sponsor local sports teams, the 4-H club and area horse shows.

Agriculture is a fundamental part of our province and a strong part of the Caledon community. It is families like the Davises that exemplify strong farm families and remind us of our rich agricultural tradition, both in Dufferin-Caledon and across Ontario.

On behalf of Dufferin-Caledon residents and the Ontario Legislature, I would like to say congratulations to the Davis family on receiving this well-deserved recognition.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise in the House today to acknowledge the Oakville Royal Canadian Legion, branch 114, and the Oakville Royal Canadian Legion, General Chris Vokes branch 486, in Bronte. Both are in my riding of Oakville.

As with all Royal Canadian Legions, they are so much more than just a social club. They actively assist veterans, who gave us freedom, and they remember those who served and who have passed on, protecting our country and our way of life. These Legions advocate for veterans' assistance, for pensions and for other benefits like treatment, appeals and insurance for those who have served in the Canadian Armed Forces and their families.

Today it's not necessary to be a veteran of Canadian or the Allied forces or a family member to join the Legion. Your membership goes a long way to helping those who need our assistance in our community.

In November, one of the many events to raise money for Legions is the poppy drive, which we've had since 1921. The poppy reminds us of the veterans' sacrifices. We're all reminded not to forget the Canadians who died in war, serving our great country.

Every Legion in Ontario will have a Remembrance Day ceremony. It will be an honour to attend both of mine in the riding of Oakville. I would urge all members of the public and all members of the House to attend the events in their community. We will remember.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Ted Arnott: In a few minutes, the Minister of Finance will rise in this House to deliver his fall economic update, the 2013 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review. While I've not seen the document, I expect that he will argue that the government is taking action to encourage job creation, invest in vital infrastructure and strengthen Ontario's economy. If he sincerely wants to pursue these three goals, he needs to look no further than the very first private member's resolution on the Legislature's order paper, urging that the Highway 6 Morriston bypass project be added to the Ministry of Transportation's southern highways program.

The House has heard me raise this issue many times. On Highway 6 south of Guelph and just south of the 401, through the community of Morriston, there is a traffic bottleneck that often literally stretches for kilometres.

I want to thank the Minister of Community Safety for recently approving a community safety zone in Morriston. This initial step, coupled with the other traffic calming measures we hope to take, should help in the short term.

We know the government has been studying the need for the Morriston bypass for something like 30 years. The environmental assessment has been completed. The township of Puslinch is doing an economic study to show how the bottleneck is hurting our local economy as well as the province's economy, and we know that the government plans to spend \$2.2 billion on new highway construction this year. All I and my constituents want to know is, when will they build the Morriston bypass? The Minister of Finance could and should answer that question this afternoon in the fall economic statement. I call upon him to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Grant Crack: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Mr. Crack from the Standing Committee on General Government presents the committee's report as follows and moves its adoption.

The committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 21, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill child care and crime-related child death or disappearance leaves of absence / *Projet de loi 21, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour les aidants naturels, le congé pour soins à un enfant gravement malade et le congé en cas de décès ou de disparition d'un enfant dans des circonstances criminelles.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed. The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

Report adopted.

VISITORS

Hon. Charles Sousa: Speaker, I ask your indulgence to acknowledge someone who has been very encouraging and supportive. As we all find in this House, through the work that we do, it's not always easy. I want to acknowledge my wife, Zenaida, who is in the audience today, and thank her for being here. Please welcome her.

Joining my wife is my father, Antonio, my cousin Eduarda and Larry Lall. Thank you as well.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Jim McDonell: I just want to correct my record from earlier today. I mentioned that Steve Clark was a co-sponsor of the British home child bill, but so is Cheri DiNovo.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is a point of order, and all members are allowed to correct their own record.

1320

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (EMPLOYEE RIGHTS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL (DROITS DES EMPLOYÉS)

Mr. Natyshak moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 129, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 with respect to employee rights / *Projet de loi 129, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail en ce qui concerne les droits des employés.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The bill amends the Labour Relations Act, 1995. Major features of the bill include the following: (1) successor rights in the contract sector, (2) reinstatement during organizing campaigns, (3) early disclosure of employee lists, (4) neutral and off-site voting and telephone-electronic voting, (5) just cause prior to first agreement or where no collective agreement is in effect, (6) re-employment after strike, and (7) an employee bill of rights poster placed in a conspicuous place in the workplace.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AND FISCAL REVIEW

PERSPECTIVES ÉCONOMIQUES ET REVUE FINANCIÈRE

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I rise to present the 2013 Ontario economic outlook and fiscal review: Creating Jobs and Growing the Economy.

We're introducing a new three-part plan for jobs and growth. Our plan is built on investing in people, building modern infrastructure and supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate.

We will do so at a time when forces outside Ontario continue to affect our economy, leading many Ontarians to worry about their job security and their future. The recovery from the global recession remains uncertain, Mr. Speaker. What is certain is our government's determination to help families and businesses succeed.

Our plan is a new direction to grow the economy. Our plan is focused, our plan is responsible and fair, and our plan will serve every region of our great province.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to make new strategic investments to spur growth, create jobs, strengthen services and help families. Above all, we are on track to balance the budget by 2017-18. And should global economic conditions falter, causing revenue growth to fall further, our priority is clear: This government will continue to protect investments in jobs and families ahead of short-term targets.

We will grow our economy. Stronger growth and new jobs are the surest, fairest path to higher revenues and a balanced budget—not drastic cuts or business-killing taxes, Mr. Speaker, but by growing the economy and creating jobs.

Uncertainty in the global economy is leading to lower revenue growth. Ontario's revenues are now more than \$5 billion lower than projected since the 2010 budget. But we've taken strong actions to reduce spending

growth, which has allowed us to overachieve on deficit reduction targets four years in a row, something that no other government in Canada has accomplished.

Mr. Speaker, our Ontario has the lowest per capita spending anywhere in Canada. For the last two years, we've held program expense growth to less than 1% while improving public services. In fact, last year total government spending fell, for the first time in over a decade.

As we continue to look at our spending, we will do so responsibly, while ensuring we are focused on our priorities. Reckless across-the-board cuts, as some have tried in the past and continue to call for today, would put our province's schools, hospitals and economy at risk. Then there are those who are recycling the same ideas from half a century ago to recklessly raise taxes. These extreme approaches would slow economic growth and weaken Ontario's ability to balance the budget.

We cannot cut our way to success, because that only results in a race to the bottom. We cannot tax our way to success, because that strangles our ability to compete. We can and must grow our way to success. We'll pursue a better, fairer way.

Responsibility and fairness: These are the principles that guide us. They're not only the principles of our government; they are the principles embraced by Ontarians. We are protecting Ontario families while taking a balanced approach to eliminate the deficit. At the same time, we're going to make investments to help businesses grow.

We will continue to act on recommendations from the commission on reforming public services. This will, in part, help to reduce the net debt-to-GDP ratio to its pre-recession level of 27%. This is a measure of our ability to afford debt, because we cannot afford to pass that burden on to our children.

Building a prosperous and fair society means that governments must work together. Unfortunately, the federal government has been making changes to programs and funding that hurt Canadians, including those that affect Ontario's competitiveness. For example, in order to implement the Canada Job Grant, Ontario would have to divert \$232 million a year from job training programs that work to a one-size-does-not-fit-all federal program.

We also need Ottawa to commit to infrastructure projects. The federal government needs to commit to the Ring of Fire, home to rich mineral resources which offer tremendous economic development opportunities, not only for Ontario but for all of Canada. Bottom line: We need Ottawa to commit, the same way they do to other regional economic priorities in other parts of the country.

Not only are we investing in people; we're helping them invest in their future. The Canada Pension Plan is the foundation of the nation's retirement income system. Though this program has served generations of Ontarians well, we must make improvements now, especially for the middle class. So far, the federal government is resisting calls to make those enhancements. We all pay a heavy price for that inaction. Ontarians, and all Can-

adians, deserve leadership on this issue. That's why Premier Kathleen Wynne is leading the way to find a Canada-wide agreement on CPP enhancement.

Last week, finance ministers took a critical step forward by agreeing on the objectives of an enhancement to CPP. But if an agreement cannot be reached, we will move forward with a made-in-Ontario solution, a solution that will help provide greater peace of mind for those Ontarians at retirement.

Strong public services are vital to our economic success. I'm so fortunate that my dad chose Canada. I'm grateful that Ontario accepted him. He arrived here on pier 21 in 1953. Like so many, he's proud of our country that gave him opportunity; and at 88, he still gives back. Thank you, Dad. Because of him, I was fortunate to attend Ontario public schools. I got my degrees from Ontario's publicly funded universities. I worked in Ontario's thriving financial services industry. My children were born in Ontario's public hospitals.

1330

What is remarkable about that story is how typical it is, how it is shared by so many in this Legislature and across our province.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're on the side of Ontarians, especially our youngest citizens. We will continue to roll out full-day kindergarten, and next year, more than a quarter million children will benefit and get the best start in life. There are some critics across the aisle that call for us to cancel this program. That is not an option.

Our plan continues to support our children, right through post-secondary, putting them on track for rewarding careers. Our 30% off tuition grant helps more than 200,000 young people each year get the education they need for the jobs they want. And this government's youth jobs strategy will help 30,000 more young people find work and start a career. We will always invest in our young people.

Ontario's economy is also strengthened when everyone has the opportunity to achieve their full potential, and that's why our government will be fair. We are continuing to remove barriers to help people on social assistance be part of the workforce as well. And, Mr. Speaker, we're also helping seniors by introducing a new grant so they can participate in more community activities.

Nous allons continuer d'appuyer notre communauté francophone comme nous l'avons fait dans le passé.

As we all know, costs for many of today's necessities are rising. So we're working to reduce those costs and protect Ontario consumers. We will continue to move forward with our auto insurance rate reduction strategy. Our actions will reduce rates for Ontario drivers by 15%, on average, over the next two years. And to further reduce costs for Ontario drivers, we will reduce fees to the Drive Clean program as well. Cellphones are now a basic utility, and we're also moving forward with measures to protect consumers and reduce costs on those contracts as well.

Before 2003, the government of the day chose not to invest in infrastructure. Before 2003, schools and

hospitals were crumbling. Since 2003, we rebuilt schools and hospitals, and opened even more. In fact, there are more than 100 hospital projects on the go in centres like Thunder Bay, London and Cornwall. There are also more than 600 new schools being opened, planned or are under construction right across the province.

Before 2003, the people of Ontario weren't always certain the lights would go on. Since 2003, we upgraded and added more electricity transmission and supply, including clean energy. That means when you flip the switch, the lights go on and they stay on.

Mr. Speaker, investing in our transit, roads, schools and hospitals improves our province's competitiveness and enhances our quality of life. Congestion costs our economy \$6 billion annually in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area alone. These investments help businesses get their products to market more easily. These investments help families get to work, go to school and get back home more quickly and safely, and that's why we're investing in transit and that's what will make Ontario even more competitive.

As a result, we're introducing two new significant initiatives to fund these projects. One is a new fund for infrastructure projects: the Trillium Trust. Gains from asset sales, like GM shares, and/or real estate, like the sale of the LCBO headquarters, would help fund this trust.

Another innovative source of funding would be Green Bonds. Ontario would be the first Canadian province to promote and sell these bonds. These are a highly attractive and an economical way to invest in our transit projects.

We will invest \$35 billion over the next three years in these important infrastructure projects throughout the province. These investments will also help support and maintain more than 100,000 jobs annually. And to grow the economy in northern Ontario, our government is leading the development of projects like the Ring of Fire, working in partnership with industry and First Nations. We will also fund improvements to local roads and bridges throughout all our regions in small, rural and northern municipalities.

Ontario has also set the standard for the delivery of infrastructure projects. Through our alternative financing and procurement (AFP) model, 28 of 30 projects were completed under budget and ahead of schedule. By enhancing our AFP model, we will ensure that more Ontario companies are helping to build more projects. As a global leader, Infrastructure Ontario will work with the province's trade offices around the world and will promote the expertise of our construction companies, engineers, architects and financial services worldwide.

Despite uncertainties in the global economy, Ontario's fundamentals are strong. We have created a stable and competitive business climate by cutting taxes, including low corporate income taxes, and by eliminating the capital tax. We also introduced legislation to cut the employer health tax for 60,000 small businesses. This change would eliminate this tax for almost 90% of

businesses, and yet there are those who are delaying the passage of this bill. That is hurting small businesses. We urge the opposition to work with us to pass this important bill.

Our actions to reduce costs have created more opportunity for businesses to invest in Ontario. Studies show, however, that many companies are not taking advantage of new opportunities to innovate and improve their productivity. Ontario's and Canada's R&D spending as a proportion of GDP remains significantly lower than that of the United States. That, in turn, allows US competitors to produce goods and services more productively. This is a race. We cannot fall behind. We cannot falter. We cannot be faint of heart.

We will help businesses become even more competitive by encouraging them to invest in new machinery and equipment. That's why we'll consider measures already taken by other parts of the world to promote investments in communications, IT and training. More importantly, other parts of the world do this well, so we will now measure ourselves against those benchmarks and best practices.

We're also developing sector strategies for those key Ontario industries. We will take targeted measures to secure new investments from global companies that concentrate on communications, R&D and IT. To help turn more Ontario technology companies into global leaders, we'll also continue to invest in organizations like Communtech, a Waterloo-based innovation hub.

The government is also helping communities through our regional economic development funds to create jobs. Since their launch, almost 45,000 jobs have been created through these funds, most recently in places like North Bay, Kingston and Windsor.

As part of our plan to grow our economy, we're determined to create the industries of tomorrow. Centennial College will partner with Bombardier, Canada's leading aerospace manufacturer. Niagara College will expand its existing advanced manufacturing program. Recently, northern Ontario opened its first new law school at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay and a school of architecture at Laurentian University in Sudbury.

Mr. Speaker, good things grow in Ontario. Our innovative agri-food industry provides more than 740,000 jobs across the province. Our Local Food Act will further support the good things grown, harvested and made in Ontario. All these initiatives, and more, will help create the jobs of tomorrow today.

1340

We will not, as some suggest, simply cut for the sake of cutting. Those actions would hurt Ontario families and take our economy backwards. We cannot cut our way to prosperity, nor can we tax our way to growth. Instead, we will lead.

Mr. Speaker, the province is stronger when we work as one, because we know that, working together, we can achieve so much more than we can alone. And that is the beauty of Ontario. It is a place that is as compassionate as it is competitive, as fair as it is prosperous. And that

balance, one that is at the heart of our civil society, is just as important as any financial balance on the books, because it is also a competitive advantage in the global economy. Our Ontario Liberal government will protect that balance always.

We must continue to invest in our schools and in our hospitals. We will work together as one Ontario: employers and employees, rural and urban, north and south. Mr. Speaker, we'll take positive, practical steps to grow the economy. We will invest in our people. We will build modern infrastructure and we will support a dynamic and innovative business climate to create jobs in Ontario.

That is our plan for jobs and growth for a stronger Ontario—one Ontario. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses. The leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, I've always believed that it's Ontario's destiny to lead Canada. The kind of Ontario that my PC team and I want to build is an Ontario with more jobs, with better take-home pay, where students are off their parents' couch, that are now deep in debt with a university degree and diploma but no job to go to; where they're surging forward on their own, with their own home, making their way in their own career.

I see an Ontario where entrepreneurs are back in business, investing, innovating and creating jobs for men and women again. I see an Ontario that has the capacity, then, to match the extraordinary generosity, the big heart, of Ontarians to help our most vulnerable populations. That's the kind of Ontario my team and I want to build, but we're not going to get there with the same tired, out-of-gas, out-of-ideas Liberal government that has crossed the line into corruption with this gas plant scandal.

I had hoped, after 10 months and 37 panels, that the Liberals would have come into the House today with a plan that would have delivered on that Ontario we all want to see: a prosperous, proud Ontario moving forward, not slipping backwards. But instead, we saw a plan that focuses on the priorities of the Liberal Party—on saving seats—but certainly not on the priorities of the hard-working families in the province of Ontario.

One thing has become perfectly clear, and I'm sad to say this, but it's obvious that the Premier and her finance minister clearly do not understand the size of the problem that confronts our province and certainly do not understand what is required to fix that problem and move Ontario forward again.

It has become increasingly clear that the only party that has a plan to move us forward, the only party that can actually build Ontario and make it strong again, is the Ontario PC Party and the team that we have with us here today.

What is that plan, Speaker? It's a plan to restore the lost jobs, to recharge the manufacturing sector, to roll out more people working in the skilled trades, to bring Ontario that prosperity that it deserves and fulfill its destiny as a leader in Canada.

I'm asked time and time again why I care so much about the debt and the deficit of this province. They

gamble that people don't care about it, but people do care. Moms and dads care. I care. And no family would leave a \$20,000 debt on the backs of their sons and daughters, their grandchildren. That's exactly what this government proposes to do.

It's extraordinarily reckless as well, considering interest rates are going to go up sooner or later, to risk all of it, to risk health care, to risk education, because you couldn't make the decisions today to spend within your means.

We sharply disagree with the Liberal and NDP coalition, who believe they can spend their way out of deficit, who believe they can tax their way to prosperity. It's time to go down a different path with a bold new plan to turn our province around.

Here's what happened after 10 years of this expensive Liberal experiment: There are so many, almost a million, Ontarian men and women who can't find a good job in the province of Ontario; we've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs that built the spine of our middle-class communities from Fort Erie to North Bay to Toronto; and average families are afraid to open up their hydro bills because those bills have doubled—all because the Liberals thought it was okay to throw away \$1.1 billion to close down gas plants simply to save two Liberal seats in the last election campaign.

Speaker, it is obvious—it is more clear now than ever—that only one party, the Ontario PC Party, has put forward a bold plan to set up Ontario for success. It is a plan to lower taxes to encourage investment in job creation. It is a plan to get hydro rates under control so families can actually pay the bills and businesses will invest. It's a plan to tear down the hidden tax of red tape, regulation and runaround to free up business to invest again. It is a plan to modernize our labour laws, to attract investment and let people control their own economic destiny. And it's a plan to clear aside gridlock by investing in subways, in highways, so families can spend more time together. That's our plan, a plan that not only talks about hope, but knows how to deliver hope.

Let's stop waiting for better, and let's make better happen. Let's change the team leading the province and bring in a team that can turn Ontario around.

Mr. Michael Prue: It is indeed a privilege and an honour to be able to stand here and respond to the Minister of Finance. You know, I woke up this morning thinking I was going to be hearing some great things. I woke up this morning thinking there was going to be a new plan. I woke up this morning thinking that the Liberals were finally going to come to their senses and do some things right.

Then I sat in a little room, and we were handed this book and we were handed this speech, and we were told what was in here. This government is only about talk; it's not about action at all. It's about talking about things over which you have absolutely no control, and when you strip away these promises, all you are left with is vague study presentations. You end up with the same old status quo where well-connected interests get results and

everyday people get nothing. That is what is contained within this economic statement. Instead of trying something new, the Liberals released a 210-page book to pat themselves on the back.

Well, I'm not patting you on the back; I'm telling it like it is. The only people who will see an immediate benefit are those who are well connected to you. Your plans of setting up P3s and PRPPs are going to make more money for people who already have a lot of money. But everyday people will have to wait for the results that you promised them vaguely but that you will not and cannot deliver. People who were looking for results that create jobs and improve pensions will have to keep waiting while Ontario will study it some more, because what you're good at is studying it and not doing anything at all.

Ontario, which you say is now advocating for pension reform—you're advocating only for modest CPP reform, but say it's up to the Harper government whether it will ever be delivered. That's not leadership and it's not a good plan.

Vague promises of legislative changes—the only immediate changes will help the big banks, the insurance companies and financial interests, because that's your new plan.

1350

We've been talking for years about taking action on targeted tax credits. Instead of saying you're going to do that, you're now proposing to study it yet again, after 10 years. The book is full of all kinds of things you're taking credit for, most of which that you're taking credit for today being things that we in this caucus have proposed for years and that we made you do in the last two budgets. That's what you're taking credit for.

We're looking at what you're trying to do here. I tell you, I'm very, very saddened by what we're seeing. You're talking about debt and deficit. You're talking about what you're going to do. You've now carved out this new thing, that you're saying, "We're going to meet our budget targets, and we're going to be out of deficit. We're going to be out of" all of these things by 2017-18, and then you immediately follow that by saying that if you're not, you've got a new path. Well, you're not going to make it. I hate to tell you, your own projections show how anemic the growth is under your leadership. Your own projections show we're at 1.8% this year and we're going to be at 2.1% next year, and that is not enough growth for you to finance the things that you're talking about here. It is simply not possible.

We, as New Democrats, are looking for something different. We're looking for some change that will actually help ordinary people, and all we're seeing are these vague promises. Oh, yes, you're going to reduce auto insurance by 15%, maybe over two years, maybe. But whose idea was that in the first place? And, after months, you're nowhere near getting near to what you need to do, and you keep defending those same interests. You come out with financial policies that do not help ordinary people.

I'm asking you again—I've seen what you've said, but this is not the kind of economic statement that is going to help people in the province of Ontario. You may think it's going to help the Liberal Party. You may think it's going to help you in some form of election platform, but in my view and the view of the people of this province, they can see right through this document. They can see right through it for what it is. It's more airy-fairy promises that will end up going nowhere.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

PETITIONS

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas Kimm Fletcher, a mother of two diagnosed with brain cancer, has been prescribed with the drug Avastin to help prolong her life;

"Whereas the Ontario health ministry's Committee to Evaluate Drugs (CED) has indicated that the use of this drug is associated with higher, progression-free survival rates;

"Whereas this drug is not covered under OHIP—but is in other provincial jurisdictions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Parliament call on the Premier and her health minister to extend OHIP funding of the drug Avastin, so that Kimm Fletcher, and others like her, can have as much time to enjoy with her family as possible; and to tell the Wynne administration that "Our health care system includes Kimm Fletcher."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, I'm receiving hundreds of these petitions.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

"Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses and local economies;

"Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

"Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

"Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services."

I agree with this petition, Mr. Speaker, and present it to Jack to bring it down to the Clerks.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I have a little bit of quiet in the House? It's very difficult to try and conduct business.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas statistics indicate that 36% of the black community are the highest users of public transit in the greater Toronto area region;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We propose through the Metrolinx 'Big Move' initiative to ensure that members of the black community are given priority access to apprenticeship, training programs and employment opportunities."

I agree with this petition, I affix my name to it and I give it to page Jack.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Michael Harris: I have a petition here with some 800 signatures.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test no longer assesses tailpipe emissions, but instead scans the on-board diagnostics systems of vehicles, which already perform a series of continuous and periodic emissions checks; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

"Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false 'Fail' results, which have resulted in the

overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean Program."

I wholeheartedly agree with this. I'm going to sign the petition and send it down with Sarhan to the table.

TAXATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the cost of living in northwestern Ontario is significantly higher than other regions of the province due to the high cost of necessities such as hydro, home heating fuel, gasoline and auto insurance; and

"Whereas an increase in the price of any of these essential goods will make it even more difficult for people living in northwestern Ontario to pay their bills and put food on the table;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reject any proposed increase to the harmonized sales tax, gas tax or any other fees or taxes in the northwest; and instead investigate other means such as increasing corporate tax compliance or eliminating corporate tax loopholes in order to fund transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area."

I support this petition, will affix my signature and give it to page Aiden to deliver to the table.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Mr. Phil McNeely: "Whereas MPP Bas Balkissoon's private member's bill, the Manoranjana Kanagasabapathy Act, 2013, received all-party support on October 31st, 2013; and

"Whereas Bill 116 was named in memory of a 52 grandmother who was killed by a truck as she boarded a Toronto bus; and

"Whereas the accident rate of drivers who drive while using hand-held devices are at a rate comparable to drunk driving; and

"Whereas penalties for infractions of section 78 of the Highway Traffic Act are too lenient;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly work together to pass Bill 116, the Manoranjana Kanagasabapathy Act (Hand-Held Devices Penalty), 2013, that would increase fines for distracted driving while using a hand-held device from \$300 to \$700 in addition to the loss of three demerit points for those in contravention of the law."

I support this petition, put my signature thereon and send it forward with Sophia.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the newly created Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with new membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government stop their job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately."

I support this petition.

1400

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's minimum wage has been frozen at \$10.25 an hour since 2010, and some workers earn even less due to current exemptions in the Employment Standards Act; and

"Whereas full-time minimum wage workers are living at nearly 20% below the poverty line as measured by the Ontario government's low-income measure (LIM); and

"Whereas minimum wage should, as a matter of principle, bring people working 35 hours per week above the poverty line; and

"Whereas an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$14 per hour would bring workers' wages 10% above the LIM poverty line; and

"Whereas raising the minimum wage will benefit workers, local businesses and the economy by putting money in workers' pockets to spend in their local community;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately increase the minimum wage to \$14 per hour for all workers and thereafter increase it annually by no less than the cost of living."

I sign this and give it to Aiden to be delivered to the table.

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr. Joe Dickson: I have a petition for the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone's responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

"Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive

innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

"Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Environment."

I have attached my signature to it and will pass it to Helen.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Jim Wilson: "Whereas Kimm Fletcher, a mother of two diagnosed with brain cancer, has been prescribed with the drug Avastin to help prolong her life;

"Whereas the Ontario health ministry's Committee to Evaluate Drugs (CED) has indicated that the use of this drug is associated with higher, progression-free survival rates;

"Whereas this drug is not covered under OHIP—but is in other provincial jurisdictions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Parliament call on the Premier and her health minister to extend OHIP funding of the drug Avastin, so that Kimm Fletcher, and others like her, can have as much time to enjoy with her family as possible; and to tell the Wynne administration that 'Our health care system includes Kimm Fletcher.'"

I agree with this petition and sign it.

ONTARIO RANGER PROGRAM

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, draw attention to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"The Ontario Ranger Program takes youth out of their comfort zones by taking youth from the south and placing them in northern camps and vice versa, allowing for personal growth;

"The Ontario Ranger Program also helps nearby rural communities as the Ontario Rangers help with various work projects and build partnerships within the communities; the work is recognized and appreciated by these small communities;

"An extensive amount of work maintaining the interior routes in major provincial parks such as Quetico, Algonquin and Temagami is completed by Ontario Rangers on multi-day overnight canoe trips...;

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demonstrate that the Ontario Ranger Program is a valuable program to the youth of

Ontario, reverse the decision to close the Ontario Ranger Program and continue to help youth make a difference in Ontario.”

I fully agree and will hand it down to page Arianna.

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

Mr. Frank Klees: I have a petition on behalf of some 850,000 Ontarians living with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. It reads as follows:

“Whereas more than 850,000 Ontarians live with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or COPD (more than 70,000 in Central LHIN) and these numbers are climbing quickly; and

“Whereas COPD is one of the most costly chronic diseases in Ontario, currently responsible for 24% of emergency department visits and 24% of hospitalizations in this province; and

“Whereas respiratory rehabilitation is a Health Quality Ontario endorsed, evidence-based intervention that improves quality of life for people with COPD and other lung diseases while saving health care dollars; and

“Whereas due to lack of dedicated funding for lung health programs the respiratory rehabilitation program at Southlake Regional Health Centre—the only such program in Central LHIN—was recently cancelled;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to urge Central LHIN—and all LHINs—to develop evidence-based plans to address COPD and other lung diseases that coordinate resources and care across all levels of the health care system; and further,

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to immediately work with stakeholders to develop a province-wide action plan for lung health to improve prevention, early diagnosis and patient outcomes, while maximizing the return on health care investment.”

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

“Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

“Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

“Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

“That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route.”

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to sign it and give it to Ian to be delivered to the desk.

AIR QUALITY

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented ... as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

“Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010...; and

“Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean Program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

“Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean Program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

“Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean Program.”

As I am in agreement with this, I have affixed my signature and given it to page Christina.

VISITORS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would like to just take this moment to recognize the students of a school in my riding who are in the east gallery: the Islamic Foundation School of Toronto.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each of the three parties to speak on the subject of Remembrance Day;

That, following all three remarks, we rise and observe two minutes of silence; and

That, following this Remembrance Day tribute, the House revert back to motions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader seeks unanimous consent. Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader?

Hon. John Milloy: No, it's the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. David Zimmer: November 11 is Remembrance Day, and traditionally there are many tributes offered throughout the province and in this chamber, where we recognize our veterans for their work that they've done and the sacrifices they've made.

We talk about defending democracy, defending freedom and defending the country, and those are noble ideals. But on another level, sometimes I think perhaps we forget to ask ourselves the visceral question, the very personal question: What did their sacrifice mean in terms of the individuals themselves, in terms of their families and in terms of their friends?

I think there is an obligation on all of us to try to understand their sacrifice in this very personal way and what it meant to them in their hearts, their minds and their souls; to feel for them, to grieve for them on a personal level for the death of a soldier, the death of a pilot, the death of a sailor. I think we have an obligation to try to feel the pain and the grief of their mothers and their fathers and their brothers and their sisters.

1410

When we reflect at some level—and it's impossible to comprehend, really, in the safety of our homes, in the safety of our careers, in the safety of this chamber exactly what that meant. How are we to understand what it must have felt like to be shot at, to be bombed, to suffer grievous wounds, to die from grievous wounds or to live with grievous wounds, blindness, limbllessness and other forms of maiming? But this is the visceral reality of what it was like to serve in the armed forces in defence of those noble virtues of democracy and freedom.

All of their names are chiseled on the various cenotaphs throughout the province of Ontario—in small-town Ontario, villages, big cities—and on high school remembrance plaques all over Ontario. But how many of us passing a cenotaph, passing one of those high school plaques, take a moment to pause and just look at those names and ask ourselves, "What did it mean to them and to their families on a personal level?"

I think that is our obligation. In fact, I know that is our obligation on this day of remembrance—the obligation to try to feel that reality, to feel that danger, to feel that fear, to feel that horror that they felt; to feel the horror and the fear and the anxiety that their families at home felt with their sons and daughters off facing grave dangers.

That is a visceral reality: World War I, 66,000 Canadians killed; World War II, 42,000 Canadians killed; Korea, 516; Afghanistan, over 160—and that's not counting the hundreds of thousands wounded. Each one of those individuals faced horror, fear, danger, and then all of those emotions that must have been on their parents' minds and on their brothers' and sisters' minds. Imagine, if you will, today in Afghanistan and the Middle East the fear of an individual, the fear of a parent for their loved one who's over there. Every step they take might be their

last step because they step on a land mine and blow up. Our obligation is to understand the magnitude of that risk and the magnitude of that sacrifice and then to respect it.

Let me tell you one story that I think more than any way drove the point home to me. Mrs. C.S. Woods of Winnipeg was invited by the Canadian government to the Canadian National Vimy Memorial unveiling, which happened in the late 1920s. There's a picture of her in a magazine of the time; I think it was the *Toronto Star* magazine or some such magazine. The magazine is in our library here. The magazine covered her story. There was a picture of her, Mrs. C.S. Woods of Winnipeg. She was standing there quietly, saluting in a very frail but dignified and brave manner. This is what the caption underneath the photograph of her said: "Among the Canadian pilgrims who attended the unveiling of the Vimy Ridge memorial was Silver Cross Mother Mrs. C.S. Woods of Winnipeg, who lost eight sons in the war. She wore all their medals" on that day at the Vimy Ridge monument unveiling.

I read that caption under the photo, and it just stopped me in my tracks for some time. But just let that thought sink in: a mother, a father and the family—eight sons. I did a little bit of research on Mrs. Woods' background. Mrs. Woods had 12 children—11 sons, all of whom enlisted. Two, in fact, were underage. And she lost eight of them. Need I say more?

I think we have an obligation to ask ourselves: How do we comprehend that sacrifice? How do we honour that sacrifice? How do we remember that sacrifice? That's our challenge on this Remembrance Day.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to represent Tim Hudak and the PC caucus as we commemorate the 105th anniversary of the end of the First World War.

The total loss of life in the two world wars is mind-boggling. While reports vary because of insufficient information, 100 million casualties worldwide is the number often cited. These numbers are important to remember. It is necessary, in order to bring into perspective what war was like.

On November 11 each year, and through the remembrance period, we recall the sacrifice made by those who did not return. The First World War was known as the war to end all wars, and for those involved, the scope of the casualties, you would think, would have convinced everyone that this could never be allowed to happen again.

The First World War demonstrated how much man's ability to destroy one another had progressed through advancing technology and weaponry; how wars were fought, however, had not. It demonstrated its savagery and futility at the same time. It was waged from July 1914 until November 11, 1918, when the guns fell silent.

Battles raged on. Ground was won, gained and lost, and gained and lost again. By today's standards, the numbers are staggering—almost unimaginable. An example of this is the Battle of the Somme. The Battle of the Somme lasted from July 1 until November 18, 1916. Some 1.2 million soldiers were either killed or wounded

in the fighting. Our Newfoundland Regiment lost over half their men, with 70% casualties in the first 30 minutes of the battle.

The following year, Canadians fought in the historic battle of Vimy Ridge, which lasted from April 9 to 12, 1917. The battle was the first time all four divisions of the Canadian Expeditionary Force fought together, succeeding where repeated attempts by our French allies had failed to take the ridge. It has been said that it was on those four days that Canada truly became a nation.

Having experienced carnage like the world had never seen convinced many that this would in fact be the war to end all wars. However, less than 21 years later, the world was back at it again, engaged in a war that had to be fought against the forces of tyranny and fascism.

Once again, our brave soldiers heeded the call. I recall, as a young boy, Remembrance Day parades in my hometown of Barry's Bay. In those days, the parade was full of veterans. Some were from the First World War; many more, including my father, from the Second World War; and others, from the Korean War.

As the years went on, I recall when there were no more First World War veterans marching in the parade, and I watched as the Second World War and Korean War veterans aged and became old men. Even as they aged, when they marched in those parades, there was a pride and resolve in their faces and their step. Every one of them had their stories and their memories, some that they would speak of and some of which they simply could not.

Despite their experiences, none of them regretted signing on and indicating their willingness to give their life in order to defeat the forces of evil.

1420

They went to war as boys and came home as men. After experiencing all the horror they did, they were expected, without skipping a beat and without a lot of support, to involve themselves in society, get to work, raise families and build our country, and that's exactly what they did.

When they came home, they continued to serve their country in so many ways. Many of them served in public life, some of them in this Legislature. I think that added to the collegial attitude this place had in years gone by. People who fought side by side in something as terrible as a world war have a different sense of perspective when it comes to seemingly petty political issues.

Each and every year, there are fewer and fewer of these brave souls left among us. We must take every opportunity to thank, in our most sincere way, those who are left and assure them that long after they are gone, we will still remember.

The freedoms we enjoy today, the freedom to assemble, as we do here, and so many others, we owe them all to those who fought and died and to those who fought and came home.

There is nothing we can do to repay those who did not return. They gave their lives that we might have ours. All we can do is ensure that their sacrifice will be remembered in the right and proper way each and every year.

They fought; they died. They saw man at his worst; they saw man at his best. They fought in war, but their goal was peace. They recognized that peace could not come without a price. The greatest gift we can give them is a continuing commitment to find that peace so that someday, if that elusive goal is reached, we can finally say unequivocally that their sacrifice was not in vain.

I urge everyone in this House and across this great province of Ontario to participate in a Remembrance Day ceremony in their community. It is the least we can do. Lest we forget.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, like many people here, I'm born of the generation after the war. We grew up listening to the stories of our fathers and mothers, our aunts and our uncles, and our neighbours about the experiences they had during those times of the Second World War and, in some cases, the Korean War, for my own family. We grew up as children in awe of these people and thinking what an amazing experience these people had and how lucky they were. We thought as children, "My God, look at those stories." We'd run to the movies to watch John Wayne and others re-enact those moments, as we saw them then as young children, of glory in the battles around the world when it came to the Second World War.

We picked up the comic books, and we read every comic book we could get our hands on. We read the stories. We wanted to get as much information as we could because we felt as if we were missing out on something, because we were missing out on an experience that our parents, our mothers, our fathers, our uncles, our aunts or neighbours had gone through. We thought, "Jeez, were they ever lucky." At least that's how I felt as a young boy growing up.

My father served. My uncle served, as many of my aunts and uncles served in different parts of the armed forces during the Second World War, many of whom saw action, many who were shot and some who were decorated. I grew up thinking, "My God, I'm so unlucky not to be part of that generation; look at this experience that they had." I never understood at first when I'd listen to the stories of the aunts and uncles and others who talked about their experiences in England, North Africa or Italy, as they went through the various theatres of war that Canada was involved in, and for some of the later generation, those who served in Korea.

But here's what's remarkable, and it took me years to figure this out: They never talked about the experience of war. They talked about camaraderie. They talked about the times that they got together and had a couple of drinks, stole a couple of eggs and found a bottle of wine. They just had a great time thinking of those stories when their friends they were in this experience with were able to share in each other's company and find some normality in this experience that they were going through. Those are the stories that I remember, and I thought, "That's what war's all about. It's about this glorious experience." And it wasn't until my family members were a lot

older—I remember my Uncle Con; my Uncle Conrad Bisson was my godfather. When I was at the funeral, my aunt said, “Gilles, you need to know that your uncle, most nights when he went to bed, woke up in a cold sweat.” He was a flame-thrower operator. She said he would wake up in the middle of the night and still smell the flesh burning.

There is nothing glorious about war; it’s a horrific experience, and that’s what I began to figure out as I got older. The reason that our fathers and our mothers and our aunts and our uncles and our neighbours never talked about the actual experience is that it’s not one that they can share with anybody else. It’s an experience that you can talk about only to others who have been there with you, and you try to find some way to hold on together before you go nuts or you hit the bottle or your marriage breaks down or you beat your children, whatever it might be, because those experiences marked those men and women in ways that we understand as a generation after the war.

Luckily for me and luckily for all of us, most people came through that experience, were able to land on their feet and make good for themselves and figure out some way to process everything that had happened as far as those horrific experiences, but some didn’t. Some, to the day they died, were affected and marked by those experiences.

I used to wonder: Why is it that a lot of my uncles tended to hit the bottle a little bit more than others? That’s what it was all about. Some of them were just trying to forget, and sometimes they got some bad habits when they were in England, North Africa or Italy, because sometimes, yeah, they did find a couple of eggs and a couple of bottles of wine and had a good time.

But what it teaches us, and what Remembrance Day is all about, is what the legionnaires say at all of these ceremonies—“Lest we forget”—because war is not something that is glamorous; war is not something that is glorious; war is not something to be celebrated. We’re to celebrate those who served on behalf of us so that we can have the democracy that we have today, but learn from their experience never to do it again.

Millions of people died in the Second World War. Imagine what this planet would be like if many of those people from various nations, from Russia to Canada and everywhere in between, had been able to live on this planet and contribute to our society, how different a planet we might be. But, instead, they were taken quite horrifically in all kinds of different manners and all kinds of different experiences.

So I say to all of us: Yes, let’s go to the Remembrance Day ceremonies, let’s go and celebrate with our vets, let’s celebrate their contribution, but let us not forget that war is not glorious. War is an experience that none of us should have to experience, and let’s be thankful that those before us did so that we don’t have to ourselves.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would all members, staff and guests please rise to observe two minutes of silence in remembrance of those who served.

The House observed two minutes’ silence.

1430

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. I just want to thank all those members for their tributes. We shall not forget.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members’ public business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy seeks unanimous consent to put forward a motion on private members’ public business. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items 59 and 61 be waived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy has moved that notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items 59 and 61 be waived. Agreed? Motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

PROVINCIAL ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Hon. John Milloy: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the reappointment of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy has asked for consent to move a motion on the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, as follows:

“To the Lieutenant Governor in Council:

“We, Her Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, request the reappointment of Irwin Elman as the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth for a term of five years, commencing on November 25, 2013, as provided in subsection 6(1) of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act, 2007, S.O. 2007, chapter 9.”;

And that the address be engrossed and presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council by the Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy has moved that an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council as follows—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Agreed? Agreed.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Hon. John Milloy: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy seeks unanimous consent to move a motion on the Standing Committee on Social Policy. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that the Standing Committee on Social Policy be authorized to conduct a comprehensive review of the Local Health System Integration Act, and the regulations made under it, as provided for in section 39 of the act; and

That within one year after commencing this review, the committee shall present a final report to the assembly, including its recommendations with respect to amendments to the act and the regulations made thereunder; and

That the committee be authorized to release any reports while the House is adjourned by depositing a copy of any report with the Clerk of the Assembly, and upon the resumption of the meetings of the House the Chair of the committee shall bring any such reports before the House in accordance with the standing orders; and

That the prior arrangements relating to LHINs agreed to by the committee on September 24, 2013, be rescinded and replaced with the following:

As part of its comprehensive review of the Local Health System Integration Act, also known as LHSIA, and the regulations made under it, the committee shall consider, but not be limited to, the following:

(1) The current decision-making process at Ontario's local health integration networks (LHINs) and whether local representation, accountability and transparency are incorporated into the process and, if not, how and where these can be better achieved;

(2) Input regarding the extent to which LHINs have fulfilled their obligations under the act, including input from, but not limited to, LHIN board members and employees, board members and employees from other health service organizations and health care policy experts in all health sectors; and

(3) The recommendations of the 2012 Drummond report as it relates to the LHSIA.

(4) While the House is in session, until such time as its final report is complete, the committee shall devote one of its two regularly scheduled weekly meeting days to conducting this review;

(5) The committee is authorized to travel for up to eight days, when the House is not sitting, for the purpose of conducting public hearings or for report writing, the details for such travel to be determined by the subcommittee;

(6) Prior to the commencement of public hearings, the committee receive a technical briefing on the LHSIA from staff of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

(7) The public hearings be advertised on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the committee's website and the Canada NewsWire;

(8) The subcommittee shall determine the manner in which witnesses shall be scheduled, including the length of time for witness presentations and questions from each party, and shall set a deadline for written submissions; and

(9) The subcommittee shall set its own deadlines for any summaries from the research officer, or for any interim report(s).

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy has moved that the Standing Committee on Social Policy be authorized—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Dispense.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Dispense. Shall the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES VÉHICULES TOUT TERRAIN

Mr. Grant Crack: It gives me great pleasure to rise today and ask my colleagues in this House for support on motion number 48.

I move that, in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four seat side-by-side vehicles and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Grant Crack: As I said, it's a pleasure, and I would like to thank my colleague from the NDP, MPP Mantha, who I spoke with recently and is very supportive of this. I know that the member has put a petition forward, if not a number of petitions forward, in support of this, and I look forward to hearing his remarks later on.

Speaker, regulation 316/03 came into effect on July 31, 2003, and I think it's appropriate that I clarify that this regulation falls under the Ontario Highway Traffic Act. I would like to reference section 191.8(1), (2) and (3):

"191.8(1) No person shall drive an off-road vehicle on a highway except in accordance with the regulations and any applicable municipal by-laws....

"Regulations

"(2) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations,

"(a) classifying off-road vehicles and drivers;

“(b) permitting and regulating the operation of any class of off-road vehicle on any highway, any class of highway or any part or parts of such highway, and permitting any class of driver to drive an off-road vehicle on any highway, any class of highway or any part or parts of such highway, and prescribing conditions for any such permission.”

So, in essence, Mr. Speaker, the Lieutenant Governor can make these regulations.

It also goes on further, on number (3), “Municipal bylaws”; I just want to make sure that I get this into the record as well:

“(3) The council of a municipality may pass by-laws,

“(a) permitting the operation of off-road vehicles with three or more wheels and low pressure bearing tires on any highway within the municipality that is under the jurisdiction of the municipality, or on any part or parts of such highway;

“(b) prescribing a lower rate of speed for off-road vehicles with three or more wheels and low pressure bearing tires than that prescribed for off-road vehicles by regulation on any highway within the municipality that is under its jurisdiction, or on any part or parts of such highway, including prescribing different rates of speed for different highways or parts of highways.”

1440

I think what I'd like to do now is just maybe give a little bit of history as to why this particular issue is important to me. I've always been an avid off-road vehicle enthusiast. I first purchased a dirt bike when I was 16 years old. I was able to use the trail system from home to go and work at the Glengarry Golf and Country Club. Back then, I paid \$150 for my Honda 70, and as I said, I used it daily. If I have time later, Speaker, I think I'll tell a little story about my father and an experience he had on his first attempt at operating that dirt bike.

Just until recently, within the last 18 months, I was an owner of a Honda 150 and my son, Calvin, had a Honda 100. We no longer have those particular dirt bikes at this point, but I'm proud to say that I own a Polaris 600 snowmobile.

Although I never have owned a four-wheeler, I have many friends—my brother-in-law, Jean Beriault is an avid four-wheeler. He uses it for hunting. I know they're used by farmers in our region and in rural Ontario—fishermen, trappers, a very handy utility tool that provides many different benefits to the rural economy.

I really enjoyed my time having owned an all-terrain vehicle, in particular a motorcycle. In rural Ontario, it's part of life; it's a way of life.

When I was mayor back in 2006, the previous council did not want to entertain allowing the use of four-wheelers on municipal roads. I ran in the campaign and said that I would fully support the use of all-terrain vehicles on municipal roads, and as such was fortunate enough to have council's support. So we passed the bylaw, and I can tell you that it was well received. During the following five years that I was mayor, there were just a number of small complaints. We've never had

anything, that I'm aware of, serious in nature happen that would make me second-guess that decision that I had made.

I know that over 90 municipalities in the province of Ontario have these types of bylaws. They're writing and have written letters of support requesting our government to allow for this change in the regulation.

Basically, what I'm asking this House to support today is to allow four-wheelers to carry a passenger—they're called two-ups—and also for side-by-sides, which is a four-wheeled all-terrain vehicle that can carry a passenger. You don't have to straddle it; you can sit on it. I think these types of vehicles are manufactured in a very safe manner, and there should be no reason why we couldn't seriously entertain this.

I just want to give some statistics. In 2012, there were 390,821 off-road vehicles registered in Ontario, and 151,985 of these were ATVs. According to the Canadian Off-Highway Vehicle Distributors Council, 11,320 new ATVs were sold in Ontario in 2012. The interesting point in this is, actually, new sales from 2006-12 were 14,287 units annually. So in the last year, 2012, the numbers have gone down. I think this regulation change would be very good for the industry, to regain some of the market share and really promote what's important to rural Ontario.

I can tell you, the gentleman who first brought this to my attention was a gentleman by the name of Nil Boulet. He's part of the Ontario Federation of All Terrain Vehicles, and he was quite helpful in helping me to understand the regulation. Of course, he comes from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, one of the greatest rural ridings in the province of Ontario. Having spoken with him and working with him, he has provided me with some more information that, in 2005, Canadians spent \$3.3 billion on ATV-related activities—sales, accommodations, fuel, that type of thing. The average age of an owner of an ATV is 37 years old, and the average purchase price is \$10,000. Those are significant investments, and given the age of the average ATV user, it's obvious that these people are responsible. They are licensed. They follow the rules of the road. They respect the municipal bylaws. That I can attest to from personal experience, having been mayor.

The all-terrain vehicle club of eastern Ontario, which has a number of members right in my riding of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, not only represents the interests of its members but it is also able to ensure that ATVs continue to grow and be recognized as a safe and responsible form of all-season outdoor recreation. This mandate is accomplished through education and communication, promoting the safe, lawful and responsible use of ATVs.

In my riding of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, there are over 300 kilometres of trails, extending from my hometown of Alexandria right up to Lefontaine. I know in this House I've spoken about Lefontaine and La Foire gourmande that's hosted there. There's a ferry there. In the winter, ATVs could utilize the ice bridge and could use the ferries coming from Quebec and Ontario—in

particular the two-ups and the side-by-sides. This would create a great economic opportunity for more tourism because, in Quebec, there is a regulation in place that does allow for two-ups and side-by-sides to use the trail systems, to use the sides of the roads. Of course, the roads are all designated as to where they can travel and where they can cross at 90 degrees. So it is safe. They're responsible.

I believe that if this regulation change were made, it would create more opportunities for different entry points across the province, in eastern Ontario in particular, since that's where I'm from, and in Arnprior and Pembroke. I think it would be great if I could get the support of everyone in this House to support my constituent in the eastern Ontario all-terrain vehicle club.

I recently became aware also of a newly formed group. It's the Ontario Powersports Working Group. It's a coalition of leaders from across the province. They work together, promoting healthy recreational living, co-operative relationships with related stakeholders, trail stewardship, environmental conservation tourism, and growth and rider safety. I'm starting to learn a lot more about this organization, and I look forward to working with them.

I had the opportunity to speak the other day—yesterday, as a matter of fact—with Glenn Draper from ATV Ontario, Wayne Daub from the Ontario Federation of All Terrain Vehicle Clubs, Peter Wood from the Ontario Federation of 4 Wheel Drive Enthusiasts, Dave Grummett of the Ontario Federation of Trail Riders, Tim West and Ron Purchase of the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs, Robert Ramsay and Jo-Anne Farquhar of the Motorcycle and Moped Industry Council, and the Canadian Off-Highway Vehicle Distributors Council.

I really appreciated their support on this, but I think one of the things that has brought more than just support for what we're attempting to do here is that we need to really take a serious look, and I would ask the ministry and the minister to take a look, at dirt bikes as well. As I said, I was an avid dirt bike enthusiast. I think they should be given the same privilege as the four-wheelers and two-ups. Perhaps some of my colleagues will be speaking to that as well.

Just a little on my father, since I do have a couple of seconds. My grandparents were at home. My mother was standing there, looking down at the schoolyard as my father was taking the dirt bike for the first spin. There was a former sand pile, but there was a dip in the grade and he went through it, looking up at us as if things were all good, and all of a sudden, there was a dust cloud. I ran down and fixed his glasses up and put them back on. He learned a lesson. Thank God he had a helmet on. My point here is: Things do happen in life. These are safe vehicles if they're used safely and properly.

I look forward to hearing some of the comments from my colleagues.

1450

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have a few minutes to speak in support of this motion. I would certainly credit the member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for bringing it forward, but I think he must have been reading our northern jobs and resources white paper. If he was, he would note that path 14 of our northern white paper, which the PC Party introduced a couple of months ago, was that the Highway Traffic Act can be continually updated to accommodate recreational off-road vehicles like ATVs, Argos, two-ups and side-by-sides.

This is something that our party has previously put forward. It's something that, if we form government, we would certainly like to do across the province. So, obviously I'll have to speak in support of this motion.

I've had lots of emails from constituents in Parry Sound—Muskoka, as well, who are supportive of the motion. Many of them are under the impression that it's a private member's bill and that it's going to change the regulation. It's a motion and certainly raises awareness on the issue, and I support that. But the government actually needs to change the regulation if they want to make this happen. I guess this is a first step, so I'm pleased to see that it's coming forward.

As I mentioned, I've had lots of emails from people within my riding, including the mayor of Burk's Falls. As the member mentioned, there are certain designated provincial highways that the current ATV rules allow a very specific definition of an ATV: four wheels, one person, you straddle it. On the highway I live on, for example, Highway 118 East, you can ride a traditional ATV. Many of the municipalities, especially across Parry Sound—I'd say about half the municipalities—allow ATVs on certain roads within the municipality, and in Muskoka more of them are starting to allow it. Bracebridge is in a trial period of allowing ATVs right now; Gravenhurst as well, I believe, is doing a trial period for ATVs.

But more and more people are using the side-by-side machines. Sometimes it's people who want to go down a dirt road for a short distance to access a woodlot, or it could be farmers, it could be hunters, it could be people who are trying to access a trail for recreational purposes, and there certainly are pluses for tourism as well.

The reeve of Burk's Falls, Cathy Still, wrote me and said:

"Hi, Norm

"Hope all is well.... Could you please support private member's bill"—thinking it's a bill—"reg 316-03 before the House concerning the allowing of side-by-side ATVs on our roads.

"It would be a very large boost to the Almaguin Highlands economy. With the municipalities in the district having already passed bylaws supporting ATVs using our roadways, I would think this is the next step."

A councillor for another Parry Sound municipality, Merv Mulligan, wrote me as well. I won't read the whole email, because I don't have time. But again, he's supportive of benefits for tourism in Parry Sound. I have Dennis Stalkie writing me from Muskoka, saying, "This will not

drastically affect us here in Muskoka, but will in Parry Sound and the Almaguin Highlands and Haliburton and other areas where the operation of ATVs is allowed. There are many economic benefits that will accrue with increased use of off-road vehicles in these areas. Who knows? As we age, we may get off our bikes and quads and get into side-by-sides.

"Regards
"Dennis."

Also, the owner of a campground in the Kearney area wrote me, again supportive of two-ups and the fact that he uses them around his campground and would like to be able to use them recreationally. In many cases, you do have to go along a bit of a road to get on a trail, and that's currently illegal in a side-by-side or an Argo.

I'm afraid I'm out of time, Mr. Speaker, but I'd like to say I'm supportive of this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I won't stand here and claim all the glory for this; I'm going to actually give it to the individuals of this province who have been flooding both my office and a lot of my colleagues' offices with their requests to see these changes, what it would actually mean to them and to their communities as far as tourism dollars and economic benefits, and just the simple enjoyment of having your family with you.

It's with great pleasure that I rise today and support the motion of the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell requesting that the Minister of Transportation change the definition of an off-road vehicle—an ORV—under Highway Traffic Act regulation 316/03.

Finally, the voices of ORV enthusiasts across Ontario are being heard as they repeatedly ask that this regulation be changed to include two-up off-road vehicles as well as two- and four-seat side-by-side off-road vehicles, to allow them to be driven under the same conditions as other recreational off-road vehicles.

I just want to ask you to indulge me for a second, Mr. Speaker, or a little bit. Again, I want to give thanks to the member for bringing this motion forward. It took some initiative.

To the thousands, the hundreds, and everybody—all the organizations, the dealerships—across the North Shore, across northern Ontario and across this province who have provided my office with the petitions that we've been presenting since April of last year—my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane as well has been presenting some of these petitions to highlight this issue—they are the ones who actually got this done.

I'm really glad, and I've got to give credit to the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, who took the initiative of bringing this forward. You're right: It is a motion, and we're going to need to push this a little bit more. It's not a binding issue, but I know I can count on individuals like the Elliot Lake ATV Club, the ATV club out of Wawa, and individuals like Mark Hamerton, who is the marketing director for the Ontario Federation of ATV Clubs, who provided some information for me

today so I can actually include it in some of the discussions that we're going to be having today.

The community of Dubreuilville: It's a lifestyle that they have there with these types of vehicles. You cannot believe how much of an engaging process this is when you actually enjoy an evening with your entire family. It's a culture; it's a good way of life. I want to say kudos to Luc Levesque, who is probably watching right now. I look forward to working with you on this, Luc, and I know you're going to be helping me out on this.

I just want to add that in the mid-1960s and through the early 1970s, the term "ATV" was originally used to refer to a non-straddle-ridden, six-wheel, amphibious off-road vehicle, an ORV. And 1967 saw the introduction of the first three-wheeled ATV, which was straddle-ridden. In 1987, safety concerns ultimately ceased the production of the three-wheelers, causing all ATV manufacturers to upgrade and develop the first four-wheeled ATV models. In recent years, with manufacturers recognizing the popularity and demand for this new, exciting type of road-riding experience, they introduced the two-up-passenger ATVs and side-by-side models as well.

Closer to home, in light of the growing ATV sales and the evident demand for places to ride, the Elliot Lake ATV Club and the city of Elliot Lake invested a great deal of time, effort and resources in preparing for the economic prospect, as they recognized the potential tourism dollars and opportunities.

In early 2000, Elliot Lake was chosen as the initial signature site in a pilot project, as the community demonstrated the commitment and willingness to work with all interests to develop a tourism product built around an experience based on the use of an all-terrain vehicle, an ATV, on a shared-use, community trail system. This initiative involved the federal government, the province and five founding communities—Elliot Lake, Mattawa, Eastern Ontario (Tweed), Cochrane and Georgian Bay (Parry Sound)—resulting in a marketing alliance known as ATVOntario.

Ontario now boasts approximately 40-plus ATV clubs and over 2,000 kilometres of well-managed trails, with more being added each year. Ontario is the ultimate ATV playground for everyone to enjoy.

Changing regulation 316/03 is a smart and safe move. As well, it provides an economic benefit to ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, not to mention the communities promoting this outdoor activity as a tourist destination.

The off-road vehicle industry continues to hold its own with steady ATV and two-up passenger sales, but side-by-sides make up approximately 40% of the off-road vehicle market, with sales increasing yearly.

The choice to buy a single-rider ATV is based on the current laws, but what it really does is promote the carrying of passengers on an ATV built for one. These aftermarket seats put the passenger's weight over and behind the rear wheels, and make front-end tip-overs a real threat.

From a safety point of view, the current law prohibits single riders from legally operating the longer and more

stable factory-built, two-person, longer-chassis ATVs, which are almost impossible to tip over backwards, one of the more common accidents occurring on a single-rider machine.

Side-by-sides equipped with roll cages, seat belts and a wide-stance wheel base are a much safer means of travel and off-roading for anyone. The fact that these much safer particular types of ATVs are currently illegal to operate on Ontario roads just doesn't make sense. Enabling multiple-passenger off-road riding helps to promote a far more family-friendly-oriented sport. With side-by-sides boasting up to four seats, this sport can truly become a family affair. Unlike family time in front of the TV or theatre screens, this is real: enjoying nature, exploring, learning and conversing with good, quality family time.

1500

How do we promote off-road tourism when not only are your family members separated on different machines, but the sheer cost of multiple machines is prohibitive in comparison to one four-seater side-by-side that the whole family can enjoy? The ATV is a very popular year-round utility and recreational vehicle that offers many hours of healthy, active enjoyment for outdoor enthusiasts. We must work together to change the current definition to properly reflect and include all of the off-road vehicles in the provincial legislation, because at the moment it discriminates against off-road enthusiasts in all parts of Ontario. The province promotes ATVing: "Ontario, Yours To Discover."

Including the two-up passenger ATVs and side-by-side off-road vehicles in Highway Traffic Act regulation 316/03 will realistically boost sales of the safer ATVs and reduce the risk of injury when carrying a passenger. These off-road machines have evolved; our legislation has not. We have to catch up. Let's not delay this motion any more. Let's move it forward so that many communities across Ontario, and families, can enjoy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to support my colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for bringing a private member's motion forward, representing his constituents in such good form. I believe that as a former mayor of Alexandria he has advocated strongly for his constituents for many years, as a consensus-builder but also as a strong advocate for many issues in his riding.

This private member's resolution will clearly clarify the rules, having positive impacts on tourism and the local economies of some of our smaller municipalities in this province. The current inconsistencies by which vehicles are being permitted to travel on the shoulders of which roads can be confusing. Furthermore, we know that when laws are confusing, they are more difficult to follow, and even more difficult to enforce by police officers.

As mentioned by the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, the current rules in Ontario are quite

different from those in Quebec. It is up to each municipality in Ontario to determine if and where off-road vehicles can drive on the shoulder of the road. I think it is important that this House provide some clarity for the owners and operators of these vehicles. This motion will bring Ontario in line with our neighbours in Quebec and provide consistent rules across this province.

Furthermore, we also allow similar types of vehicles, with all the same mechanics, to drive along the shoulder. It also makes sense to me to allow two-up and side-by-side vehicles the same privileges as single-rider ATVs. This also makes it easier for off-road vehicle operators and automobile drivers.

By making the rules the same for all of these vehicles, automobile drivers will be better able to predict the path of ATVs approaching the roadways. Currently, when the ATV approaches a roadway, by law it may either have to cross the road at a 90-degree angle, or it may be able to turn and run parallel to traffic on the shoulder. This is quite a concern in terms of safety. For automobile drivers who are not as familiar with the local rules and restrictions, this is creating more confusion.

We all know that our roadways are safer when drivers understand all the rules, and are able to follow the law and better predict the paths of other moving objects, pedestrians and vehicles around them. Making the rules consistent for these similar types of all-terrain vehicles will help motorists as well.

I know that communities in rural Ontario use ATVs and off-road vehicles for recreation, and also to help keep their local economies growing. We all know Ontario is rich and diverse with natural resources. It's also very vibrant and very beautiful. Often, Ontarians use ATVs to get to different parts of the province that are otherwise inaccessible. More importantly, farmers use ATVs to move more quickly and directly through their crops and fields. Because of this technology, local economies have grown and Ontarians are able to enjoy more fully the beauty of our province.

I'm very pleased to support this resolution brought forward by my colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, as it will clarify the rules, remove any inconsistencies, improve safety on our roads and allow for further growth in tourism and in the economy in rural Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to stand and support this motion put forward today by the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell with regard to the legalization of the use of side-by-sides as off-road vehicles and changing the legislation to give them the same privileges as other ATVs.

This is something that has been an issue over the last several years, and I have advocated on many occasions to the ministry to make changes in this regard. Ever since they allowed the standard ATVs to have this access, this has been an issue, and the argument has always been that they didn't qualify under certain regulations. Well, this will change that regulation to allow that to happen.

If the argument is safety, then there is no argument. I don't think there's anybody out there who could possibly pretend that these vehicles would not be safer than standard ATVs. The way they're built—much broader, with a lower centre of gravity—they're far more safe from that point of view.

The province of Quebec has allowed this to take place. I think it's important that we recognize that not only has the issue of safety really been taken off the table, but it's one that everybody wants anyway. The industry wants to see it, the users want to see it, and it would have a significant economic benefit for all of us. It's only within the last few days that people would be aware that it's being debated today, but I have received a number of emails from people from my constituency asking us to support this, as they know I have over the years.

I believe this motion is going to pass today, and I'm happy for that. My request, then, to the government side is, don't let this issue collect dust. Don't let it die. You have the power to move this bill ahead. It doesn't do us any good with regard to what we're doing here today if it sits and collects dust. This is something that makes a whole lot of sense. There would be significant benefits, and the safety issues have long been dealt with. It is not an issue of safety whatsoever.

So my request to the members on the government side, to the people in the cabinet and to the Premier is, if this motion passes today—and I'm hopeful that it will—then move on with it. Move ahead and get this passed so that we can have an equal playing field with regard to ATVs here in the province of Ontario.

I know that a lot of the people who have sent emails in the last few days are out hunting this week, because it's hunting season, and I know my family is out hunting as well. The use of these vehicles in the bush is one thing, but having the ability to use them on the sides of roads, where prescribed, is something that would be extremely helpful to all of us. I hope that today the House would pass this motion and then it would get to committee to make any changes that would make the motion stronger, and then pass it into law so that we can do the right thing here in this assembly.

Again, I commend the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for bringing this to the House today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It is indeed an honour to be able to stand today and support the motion by the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell regarding—and I'm not going to read the long legal term. Basically, from where I sit in northern Ontario, an ATV is something you straddle, it has handlebars, and that's legal. But when you put a steering wheel on it and you sit somebody beside it, it's not; it's a side-by-side. The problem with that is, everybody is using them, so a lot of people are breaking the law. That's a problem.

1510

When I was a farmer, I had one. I have a Polaris 500. It had a "slow moving" sign on the back and I was a

farmer and I could legally drive it. But now I'm not a farmer and now it's illegal. So there's something very wrong with that. Where my people get the most upset about this is you've got your 50-year-old couple, like the people in Virginiatown—the mayor of Virginiatown, Clermont Lapointe, and the council held a public meeting on this. It came through loud and clear. They just want to get from town to the bush, and where I live, you can do that. But when they do that, they are breaking the law, so there's something wrong there. There's really something wrong there.

Other people have been pushing on this: Paul Schoppmann, the mayor of St.-Charles, and Bill Enouy, the mayor of Kirkland Lake, on behalf of the Timiskaming Mayors' Action Group, pushing this really hard, and for a very good reason. It's part of our life in northern Ontario. The machines have evolved, and the law has to evolve with it.

For those people who think that petitions and stuff don't matter, petitions do, because we've been putting petitions. I've got a letter here from the Minister of Transportation. I'm going to read it. From April 30:

"I would like to thank the member for bringing forward the request of his constituents.

"Since single-rider ATVs were granted limited on-highway access in 2003, Ontario's collisions statistics continue to support the ministry's concerns with their on-road safety record. As a result"—April 30, 2013—"the ministry is not currently considering expanding the existing on-road access to additional off-road" vehicles. "This approach is also consistent with the positions of the public health community and major ORV manufacturers."

I fully support the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, and I hope that all of us together can change the minister's mind. I agree with the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke that we have to keep the focus, the eye of the government, on this issue. But with that, I am very concerned, because the mayor of Kirkland Lake had a meeting at AMO specifically on this issue with the parliamentary assistant to the minister. Again, we fully support this motion, but we've got to keep the eye of the government. I would like to read the response to the mayor.

"Dear Mayor Enouy,

"Thank you for meeting with me at the Association of Municipalities (AMO) of Ontario 2013 annual conference....

"I sincerely appreciate you and the delegation from the town of Kirkland Lake taking the time to speak with me. On behalf of Minister Murray and myself, I want to say how much we look forward to working with you as we build a prosperous and fair Ontario.

"If you have any questions or would like to provide additional information"—they didn't even bother mentioning the issue. I would really like to thank the minister, when he gives a response, to actually mention the issue.

We'll support it, but please, push it within your caucus. Let's not just use it for an election stunt; let's actually get it done on behalf of the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: Je suis heureux de prendre la parole aujourd'hui en faveur de la motion présentée par le député de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

I'm pleased to stand today to speak in support of the motion presented by the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, and I'd also like to thank him for his advocacy for his riding and for rural and agricultural issues. I know that he's following in some big footsteps from the former member, Jean-Marc Lalonde. He's doing a great job and he's a great local advocate for issues in his riding. He comes to our Ottawa caucus meetings, and every time he has got at least one or two coming up.

The motion we're discussing today proposes that the operation of off-road vehicles under the Highway Traffic Act, regulation 316/03, be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other ATVs and off-road vehicles. I believe this is a reasonable change.

As it currently stands, single-rider ATVs, a subset of the ORV, have limited on-road access. With the exception of 400-series highways, single-rider ATVs are permitted to ride along the shoulder of a highway in the same direction as the traffic. The Highway Traffic Act does not include two-up or side-by-side ATVs and other off-road vehicles. This can be limiting for riders, as the single-rider design does not allow for passengers or extra cargo. As a result, we have a patchwork of rules and regulations.

This motion will change that. It will modernize the Highway Traffic Act to include a new class of ORV. It will bring the Highway Traffic Act in line with the laws of the neighbouring province of Quebec. It will allow additional ORVs to access public roads in order to travel between recreational trails.

While this motion is about updating the Highway Traffic Act, it does so in a safe and responsible manner. According to the Ministry of Transportation, ATVs must be registered, display a clear rear licence plate and be insured under a motor vehicle liability policy. All drivers must wear appropriate safety equipment, such as a motorcycle helmet. Finally, only drivers who are at least 16 years of age and in possession of a valid driver's licence are permitted to drive their ATVs on public roads.

These same requirements will apply to this new class of vehicle under the proposed changes to the Highway Traffic Act. This ensures that both traditional and recreational ORV drivers will be kept safe.

Mr. Speaker, ATVs and ORVs have come a long way. They're a major recreational vehicle now. It's an activity that's shared by over one million Ontarians. I have received a number of emails at my office with regard to this. I received one just today from Adrian de Koning, an Ottawa South resident, asking me and my colleagues to

support this motion and for the ministry to put it to further study.

"I am a father of three boys," he says. "My wife and I enjoy off-road motorcycling in Limerick and Larose forests as well as the Calabogie region...."

"I support the Ontario Federation of Trail Riders and the Bytown Motorcycle Association. I encourage you all to consult them on issues this motion may raise."

Monsieur le Président, j'encourage tous les députés à appuyer cette motion.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members to support this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: I, too, would like to lend my voice in supporting this motion. I'd like to thank the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for bringing this forward in his private member's slot.

I think it's also important to note that the member probably read one of our more recent white papers, and I'd like to thank our members from Parry Sound–Muskoka and Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. In that white paper, we called for the Highway Traffic Act to be updated to actually accommodate off-road vehicles like ATVs; specifically, Argos, two-ups and side-by-sides. Of course, the member's bringing this forward is important, but I would like to thank those two caucus members too for bringing that forward only months ago.

Speaker, I don't know if you've had a chance to get out and drive or ride on one of these ATVs or two-ups before, but I can tell you, as we've heard in the House today, that Ontario has some of the best landscapes around the world to ride the finest trails, which we have in Ontario, with these fine vehicles. In fact, they're made right here in Ontario.

I'd like to spend a bit of time to talk about Ontario Drive and Gear. They reside in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, a major manufacturing employer in New Hamburg. They're better known as the manufacturer of the Argo.

I'll give you a brief history. Ontario Drive and Gear originated back in the 1960s, when they started manufacturing the Argo. In fact, they started in Kitchener, but they grew so large that they had to move out to the New Hamburg area, producing Argos throughout their history. The Argo is world-renowned for its versatility and capability in traversing difficult terrain, but in 2008, the challenge of our lives arrived: to help the Canadian Space Agency design a vehicle capable of withstanding the conditions on the moon—the lunar rover.

I spoke with ODG's chairman, Joerg Stieber, this morning and told him I'd be supporting this motion. But more importantly, last year, I had the honour of celebrating 50 great years of Ontario Drive and Gear manufacturing the Argo in Ontario. I'd like to thank Ontario Drive and Gear and their employees for the great work they've done over the last 50 years.

1520

I, too, have been contacted by many constituents in my riding, asking me to support this bill. Just this week,

Mark Jeffery from Kitchener, Rob Conlin, also from my riding in Kitchener, and then Keith Bowen, president of the Great Lakes ATV Club, asked that I would support this motion, which I definitely will do. In fact, a lot of them voiced their concerns about the regulation, and I'd like to take the time to thank them for writing and emailing me on this important issue.

The two-seater ATVs are arguably a lot safer—like an Argo. They allow each passenger to have a place to sit properly instead of squeezing two people on the back of a one-seater.

We need to make these rules fair. We hear a lot about a fair Ontario; well, I think that this is a step in the right direction. Of course, not only for pleasure—as ATV or Argo riders will welcome this much-needed change, and we ask that the government actually now move forward with the change. It also will help businesses, farmers, golf courses, agribusinesses, and recreational facilities like hunting camps, campgrounds and amusement parks make better use of these side-by-sides. Especially with warmer winter months, businesses and recreational riders are able to ride their ATVs year-round.

For companies like Ontario Drive and Gear in New Hamburg and other manufacturers across this province, I'm sure that this will actually increase production of these vehicles and create good-paying jobs.

Again, I'd ask the government to speed up the adoption of the motion. It has been 10 years too long. You have my support on this private member's motion ensuring that we make the rules across the province fair.

Thanks, Speaker, for allowing me to provide my comments on this motion today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It is, as always, an honour for me to rise in my place here in this chamber to speak on a particular motion that's being put forward, and to not only stand to speak on this but to stand to speak to something that—from the debate that has taken place or the discussion or the dialogue that has taken place here in the chamber today is an initiative brought forward by my colleague the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, a motion, an idea, a concept, that has such broad support in this House.

Everyone else who spoke prior to me rising today has spoken very eloquently about the technical merit that exists in this particular motion. There are a couple of other things that I guess I wanted to bring to the discussion or to the debate this afternoon.

What I heard loud and clear from the members on the opposite side of the House was that while there is significant support both today and also historically for what the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell has brought forward to us today, they want to make sure that those of us on this side of the House don't lose sight of how important it is to not just talk about it today but to seek—to continue to advocate—to support it here today, and to support this member, my colleague, our colleague and this initiative, but also to continue to advocate for this particular position.

I guess before I address anything specific in the motion itself, I want to say to those who may be watching from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell or others who may be watching from other parts of Ontario, and I know that all of my colleagues on this side of the House would definitely agree, that in my time over the last 13 months as an MPP, I don't believe that I have seen anyone who is a more adamant, a more effective advocate, not only for his own community but also for issues that affect communities like Glengarry–Prescott–Russell right across the province of Ontario.

If there is nothing else that I accomplish in my brief comments this afternoon, I want to make sure that those watching, those listening, those who might review this in Hansard after the fact know—because this is an issue that does provoke a great deal of passion and emotion in parts all across Ontario—and also, to the members opposite: You can rest assured that the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell will not rest until other folks on this side of the House understand how important this measure is. It's why this motion deserves the support that, I understand from the comments that we've heard thus far, it will receive today, but it's also why it's important to continue to support this member, the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, as he continues to advance this cause, as he continues to talk about this issue.

He recognizes, as someone who spoke very eloquently today about how this is something that has impacted his own life and his relationship with his father and his relationship with his son, like it has for the members who spoke on this side and other sides of the House—it is very, very clear to those of us who are here today hearing the comments made by all members of all parties about why this is such an important motion to support, why the motion itself deserves support and why this particular member deserves the support of everyone here in the House today.

I just want to say again: I don't have any doubt, whether it's in our caucus meetings, whether it's in the hallway, whatever the case may be in this building, that this particular member is someone who, time and time again, is always ready to stand up and be counted on those issues that are important to communities like Alexandria, like others in his community, but also across the rest of eastern Ontario and, frankly, across the rest of rural Ontario. He is indeed a champion.

With respect to the actual merits of the motion itself, I'm sure members all around this House will understand that there are a number of municipalities that are extremely supportive. Over 90 rural municipalities are supportive of this motion and this concept: for example, the municipality of Kincardine, the county of Lennox and Addington, the municipality of Central Huron, the municipality of Huron East, the municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula, the township of Faraday, the Corporation of the Township of Huron-Kinloss, Grey county, and I know there are many, many others.

Also, I believe the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell referenced this in his opening remarks on this

motion: This is an undertaking that also has the very strong and fervent endorsement of the Ontario Power Sports Working Group. Here's the actual official endorsement quote from that particular organization, which I'd like to briefly read into the record:

"The Ontario Power Sports Working Group is pleased to see the off-road vehicle and power sports industry recognized by the Ontario government. Recently, we have many opportunities before it, including the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport's consultation efforts to strengthen the Ontario Trails Strategy.

"With steps like these being taken to improve the sector, such as Mr. Crack's motion 48, we will be better able to provide fun, healthy and safe opportunities for recreation and economic opportunity. This is an appreciated step in the right direction for ATV enthusiasts, and a great step forward for the power sport sector."

Everyone here today, from the comments we've heard, I expect will be supporting this motion, all deserved because of the hard work of the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, you have two minutes.

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to thank the members from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Algoma–Manitoulin, Scarborough–Agincourt, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Timiskaming–Cochrane, Ottawa South, Kitchener–Conestoga and Vaughan. I didn't think I would get this wonderful support, because this was an issue that was dear to my heart, as I had mentioned in my opening 12-minute remarks. I'm really enthusiastic as to the support that I've heard from all three parties here today.

I can tell you, this is an issue about rural Ontario, but it's also another issue: that there's one Ontario. I was able to speak with a gentleman who had a 1-647 number two days ago, and I thought, "Well, that's a Toronto number, a GTA number." Sure enough, it was, but when I asked him if I was bothering him when I called, he said, "No, I'm in a tree stand near Kincardine"—or Woodstock; it was one of the two. It's a perfect indication that it's not only rural Ontarians that support this particular motion. Urban Ontarians who love to go to the country, who love to go to their cottages, who love to go hunting could certainly benefit by this regulation change.

I look forward, with the support of my colleagues who have worked on this in the past as well, to continuing to have discussions with the Minister of Transportation. Hopefully we will be able to make this regulatory change sooner than later, following today's debate and today's vote. Hopefully this will pass and we will get some response from the minister as soon as possible.

Thank you very much, everyone. Thanks to my colleagues on both sides of the House. I encourage everybody to keep up the good work on behalf of all Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I will take the vote at the end of private members' public business.

ONTARIO FORESTRY INDUSTRY REVITALIZATION ACT (HEIGHT OF WOOD FRAME BUILDINGS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA REVITALISATION DE L'INDUSTRIE FORESTIÈRE DE L'ONTARIO (HAUTEUR DES BÂTIMENTS À OSSATURE DE BOIS)

Mr. Fedeli moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 with respect to the height of wood frame buildings /
Projet de loi 13, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment en ce qui a trait à la hauteur des bâtiments à ossature de bois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's my great pleasure to again be introducing Bill 13, the Ontario Forestry Industry Revitalization Act, on behalf of the forest industry and on behalf of all of northern Ontario.

1530

Forestry, as you know, is a vital part of the northern economy, and it has been hit hard over the past decade. Over the past several years, some 60 lumber mills have closed across the north. That's 80% of all mills and 10,000 resource sector jobs that have disappeared. It is my hope that this bill will help reverse the damage that has been done and help kick-start a revival in the forestry sector of northern Ontario.

The Ontario Forestry Industry Revitalization Act would amend the Ontario building code to permit wood-framed multi-use buildings to be constructed up to six storeys instead of the current four storeys. This seemingly small change could provide a tremendous boost to the forestry industry by increasing domestic demand for lumber, supporting 200,000 jobs and stimulating 103 forestry-dependent communities, primarily in the north.

Last March, when I first introduced this legislation, I was joined here at Queen's Park by Jim Lopez, president of Tembec, one of Canada's premier forestry companies; Mr. Michael Giroux, president of the Canadian Wood Council; and Marianne Berube, Ontario executive director for Wood WORKS!.

Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that Marianne Berube is here in the gallery supporting this again this year. I want to offer her thanks, but I also want to let you know that Wood WORKS!, the organization that Marianne heads up, promotes the use of wood to not only builders but to architects and to engineers who have seen, worldwide, the use of wood grow. We've seen much acknowledgment of its success and many awards worldwide, not only for Wood WORKS! but for the buildings that have been created from northern Ontario's wood.

It was extremely pleasing also, Speaker, to see members from all three parties support my legislation last year on second reading. I thank them again. It's the right thing to do because all of Ontario can benefit, as I will

explain, and my hope is that this House will again express its all-party support for this bill here today.

We have worked very closely for a long time with the industry to develop this legislation. For that reason, it does not promote the use of one construction material over another but rather focuses on the tangible benefits this change could offer to all of Ontario. Since then, much technical work has been done to move this idea forward.

The Ontario Home Builders' Association has recognized the merits of this idea and this legislation and is formally endorsing passage here today. In an email containing their letter of support, which was sent to all members, they state, "The Ontario Home Builders' Association welcomes the opportunity to work with architects, designers, building officials and fire services throughout a technical Ontario building code process to bring this safe and affordable new housing option to Ontario." Their letter also notes that six-storey wood frame construction has both the support of the chief planner and the chief building official of the city of Toronto.

The Ontario Home Builders' Association believes this legislation presents opportunities for Ontario municipalities to help "rejuvenate their downtowns and their main streets with safe, affordable and community-appropriate projects that can serve the local community needs, from student housing to transit-oriented condominiums and new, purpose-built rentals."

They also state, "It is time to bring this option to Ontario," and they look forward to working with all the stakeholders throughout the OBC technical sessions to "ensure these buildings are safe for both the occupants and the fire services."

The Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities also supports this. They stated, "These changes will expand the role of wood in mid-rise construction, providing significant social, economic and environmental benefits to the province and its people without compromising safety."

Recent research has been done by the national research council and FPInnovations to support upcoming changes for the national building codes, ensuring that building six-storey wood frame buildings will be safe. We're hoping for early adoption of the national codes in Ontario.

FONOM also states, "The increased use of wood has the potential to sustain current jobs and provide an opportunity to create new ones; to encourage investment and innovation into new processes and technologies; and contribute to the economic prosperity of," in their case, northeastern Ontario.

Now the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, NOMA, also is backing Bill 13. President Dave Canfield wrote, "We fully support Bill 13 for proposed changes to the Ontario building code by adopting the national code changes for six-storey wood construction as soon as possible. We will ensure that wood has a fair playing field, providing economic opportunities for all of us."

The Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce previously expressed support for this legislation and brought for-

ward a resolution with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, which read, "That the Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the government to give its full support for the proposed changes to the Ontario building code regarding the use of wood in mid-rise construction, and urges that the proposed changes be incorporated into the revised edition of the Ontario building code."

Speaker, as you can see, my bill has broad support across northeastern and northwestern Ontario and from the important industrial forestry partners here in southern Ontario. As you may be aware, the submission period for changes to the national building code ends next month. That means there will be no further reason to wait to act. We can move forward with this on January 1, 2014. The forestry industry needs this support and if we don't move ahead, we risk falling behind other jurisdictions like BC, where work on this bill is proceeding rapidly. Bill 13 will fast-track the process. Again, in BC, they have passed this within nine months, and they are now building multi-storey wood buildings.

My bill will also allow Ontario to respond to lower export demand for its softwood lumber and stimulate the forestry sector in the north by creating tariff-free local markets. Ontario's softwood lumber industry is reliant on the housing sector, with between 60% and 70% of provincial production currently being exported to the United States. But with Ontario's population projected to rise by nearly 35% by 2036, the demand for more higher-density, multi-family residential buildings will continue to increase. Market experts estimate that the mid-rise sector could represent 8% to 10% of the entire multi-storey market in Ontario in the next 20 years, up from 3% today.

As well, through the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and Places to Grow Act, Ontario and almost all municipalities are committed to reducing urban sprawl. By 2015, at least 40% of all residential development in the greater Golden Horseshoe must be built on land already designated for residential or commercial use. The Toronto Star just yesterday reported on provincial growth policies to control sprawl being compromised. This bill can help address that very issue.

As I mentioned earlier, British Columbia is already seeing the benefit of changes to allow more wood construction in their mid-rise buildings. BC enacted their Wood First Act in 2009 and fast-tracked changes to its building code in 2009. It took them nine months. That's all it took to allow wood frame construction for up to six storeys. Since then, the incorporation of wood frame structures in the building code has created over 280 buildings as new housing options for thousands of students, families and others in British Columbia. Now Quebec is moving strongly in this direction as well. On a market scale, introducing a wood frame option has made building mid-rise structures considerably more cost-effective.

The increased consumption of lumber brought about by this bill will stimulate Ontario's forestry sector in response to the economic weakness and decreased

demand from the United States. My Bill 13 will create jobs and growth in northern Ontario communities dependent on forestry while reducing construction costs and helping southern Ontario meet targets to reduce urban sprawl. Wood frame construction will also reduce the carbon footprint and increase the energy efficiency of mid-rise buildings.

Speaker, this is a win-win-win-win situation.
1540

I come from the city of North Bay, in the riding of Nipissing. We have 66 manufacturing companies within our community. Mattawa, Powassan, Trout Creek and others are all heavily dependent on the wood sector. We have seen Mattawa devastated by various things, including the Far North Act and Bill 151. Men and women from Mattawa need to go out to the Alberta oil sands to find work, and the families are left with one parent at home.

This is a wonderful opportunity to bring back the forestry sector, bring life back to those 103 communities like Mattawa that are dependent on the forestry sector. This is an opportunity for those 10,000 resource-based jobs that have been lost throughout northern Ontario and an opportunity for those 60 communities devastated by the loss in the forestry sector.

In closing, Speaker, I want to reiterate that we will respond to the concerns of all the stakeholders. This is no longer a political debate, it's a technical one, and I invite those with concerns to bring forward their technical data and evidence so we can make sure all of their concerns are adequately addressed. The Ontario building code is built on technical data, not politics and not rhetoric.

Again, I want to thank all the parties for supporting my bill last year, and it is my hope that members of all parties, especially my colleagues from northern Ontario, will indeed support Bill 13 in the Legislature today so it can receive proper scrutiny in committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm pleased to rise to speak in support of this bill. The NDP does support initiatives that will aid the forest industry in Ontario. There have been many other jurisdictions, not just in Canada but also across the world, that have also used wood successfully in mid-rise buildings, and I think that we should be looking at ways to improve our building code, as well.

As the member from Nipissing just mentioned, action is required to aid the forest industry and the job crisis that we've had for many years now in northern Ontario. In northern Ontario, we've lost about 40,000 jobs, which has decimated entire communities, and we are now seeing a comeback. We've been seeing this for the past several months, where we're hearing some positive news out of some communities, communities in my riding like Ear Falls. We're also hearing some positive rumblings in places like Kenora. I think creating some changes that will increase demand for some of the products that we're making, some of the value-added products as well, will only serve to help our forest industry.

It should be mentioned that wood frame buildings are already widely used in North America for single-family housing, but in non-residential—industrial, commercial, institutional and multi-family construction sectors—there are some environmental and economic gains that are possible through more intensive use of wood products in these types of constructions.

As I said, other jurisdictions and provinces have taken similar action, so this is not something that hasn't been done before; it's not something that's untested. For instance, Sweden passed legislation allowing wood frame construction in apartments in the early 1990s, and that has helped them to support a strong domestic wood industry. In France, they have the wood construction environment plan, which aims to increase the market share of wood in construction by 25%. There are also other examples, whether it's BC or other places.

So, in addition to increasing demand for wood, this bill could also likely benefit the environment, and I think that's something that needs to be mentioned, especially whenever we're talking about our forest industry and the products that we make as a result of forestry. As I said, the bill could benefit the environment, since the use of wood in construction, as opposed to steel or concrete, would require less energy and would therefore release fewer greenhouse gases. Just to kind of bring that point home, using one cubic metre of wood, instead of the equivalent amount of concrete or steel directly, contributes to the reduction of about one metric tonne of greenhouse gas emissions—the CO₂ equivalent.

There are some limitations of the bill, though, and I'd like to take a couple of minutes to talk about those. First, it needs to be mentioned that there are some Ontario firefighters, including the Fire Fighters' Association of Ontario, who have expressed some concern that the increased height of multi-storey wood frame buildings will increase fire-related risks to firefighters, occupants and the public. Specifically, their concerns have been raised about the reliability of fire resistance, fire safety during construction, the ability to evacuate, wood shrinkage and the possible breach of firewalls, in addition to some other things that are related to that, including local emergency response time.

But there are some things that could be done—for instance, the inclusion of sprinkler systems. If those were to be put in and done hand in hand, we could minimize some of those risks. That's something that AMO has suggested as well, again, that these fire risks can be mitigated by incorporating sprinklers.

Of course, one of the things that I think needs to be mentioned, just because it could be a little misleading otherwise, is that there also isn't a buy-Ontario component to this bill. That's something that I think would help our forest industry probably more than anything else in this bill. We want to encourage people to buy and use wood, not just for the sake of buying and using wood, but also to make sure that there's a direct correlation between the increased wood that we incorporate in our new construction or remodelling—but also that that is

correlating with good jobs that are right here at home in Ontario.

So all in all, as I said, I'm pleased to stand here in support of this bill. I'm going to allow my other northern colleagues a few minutes to weigh in on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to join today's debate in the Legislature on this bill and the discussion of how we find a balance between building cost, construction and public safety.

As was stated earlier, the building code currently allows for buildings four storeys or less to be constructed with a wood frame. This bill, if passed, would allow wood frames to be used in buildings of up to six storeys instead of four.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member from Nipissing for bringing this bill forward because I think it's an important issue that we should debate. This is a conversation that my own ministry has been actively working on for the past two years, so I welcome the participation of all my colleagues in the House in debating this important issue.

In 2010 and 2011, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing conducted extensive consultations on potential changes to the building code, including the potential requirements for mid-rise wood frame construction. At the time, we heard from a number of our partners how the opportunity for mid-rise wood frame construction could bring a new level of interest to the Ontario market.

Northern municipalities, in particular, are looking for ways to increase jobs and growth by expanding the forestry industry, but we also heard from stakeholders like firefighters who cautioned us not to ignore public safety. They told us that more research was needed before we took the step of moving from four storeys to six storeys, and that is what I think is the greatest flaw of this private member's bill. At the end of the day, the bill doesn't address something that's important to firefighters and homeowners—safety. This bill could pose significant safety issues for both residents and our emergency responders, so it does require further debate.

I'm not sure about the opposition, but our government's priority is to make sure Ontarians are safe in their homes and businesses and that first responders have the support they need when they answer the call to come to our homes and protect us.

I want to be clear: I'm not opposed to the principle of Bill 13. In fact, I think there's merit in examining more affordable methods of building, and our forestry industry will certainly benefit from these proposed changes. If done carefully, allowing six-storey mid-rise wood buildings would continue strengthening northern Ontario's forestry industry. In fact, I would go so far as to say that having a sensible policy on mid-rise wood construction would potentially help our province and help our cities and towns grow in a sustainable way. These proposed changes could also potentially reduce the cost of housing

for many Ontarians, as using wood often reduces the cost of homes in comparison with other materials. And with our large tracts of forest in the north, we have an affordable, homegrown solution to the growing need for mid-rise housing. But we're not there yet.

That's why my ministry is supporting a National Research Council study looking at the use of wood in mid-rise wood construction of up to six storeys. We expect that evidence, the NRC report, to be available to us in the early spring of 2014.

1550

So despite the importance of these changes, I believe the bill is premature, and this point is important, because we need to make sure we don't leave first responders vulnerable to risks that could easily be mitigated. I'm prepared to wait until the findings of the NRC are released.

We have an obligation to ensure that any decisions we make take safety first into consideration. That said, despite the serious concerns I have about the member's bill, mid-rise wood construction does present an important opportunity for the forestry industry, the construction industry and Ontario homebuyers.

I look forward to continuing this important debate with the member from Nipissing, because we believe that jobs and the economy remain our government's focus, but that should not come at the expense of the lives of Ontarians or our emergency services. However, as I mentioned earlier, since I agree with the principle of this bill, I think it's important to have the discussion in balancing the effects of safety while promoting growth in our communities.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: When I chose to run for elected office, I was guided by a clear principle that individuals, businesses, municipalities and other key players that ensure the quality of life we know today must be free to choose the means by which they achieve their goals. I am therefore very pleased to rise to speak in support of this bill, because it creates greater choice in the determination of building materials and urban density.

As the population of Ontario grows and many families move to the suburbs, the issue of sprawl has been on the minds of many urban planners. We must find new ways to accommodate the public's right to choose where they live and raise their families, with our commitment to preserving Ontario's natural and agricultural heritage for future generations.

Bill 13 provides a greater range of options for developers, who will be able to use their own tariff-free, job-creating Ontario wood to build higher-density affordable housing. Ontario wood creates jobs in the north, where the population stands to benefit the most from the region's economic development. Because it is sourced internally, it is not subject to the whim of other provinces or countries. Wood is truly one of Ontario's greatest resources.

The safety of wood-frame buildings is now ensured for many years—and there is still work being done—by a

tight and safe building code; the invention of new fire-resistant materials, coatings and films; and innovations in the fire-extinguishing sector, with new and better sprinklers. Ontario's wood has provided safe and sustainable building material for generations of Ontarians.

This bill will enable us to use wood to its full potential by building higher-density residential areas with wood-frame buildings. This will naturally reduce pressures on those municipalities that are seeing their populations grow, requiring more serviced land for new subdivisions. With higher wood-frame buildings, they can build higher, safer and cheaper rather than building out with more of the same design.

Furthermore, as we become more environmentally conscious, we have to remind ourselves that the construction industry sources many raw materials with a high carbon footprint and does not have the option to use wood for many developments because of current building code limitations. By giving developers and municipalities a choice to use a renewable, sustainable, low-carbon-footprint source such as wood, we give every player in the construction industry an opportunity to contribute to a better and healthier environment while creating jobs where they are so desperately needed.

Modern safety technology has simply made the prohibition of wood-frame buildings taller than four storeys obsolete. We need to pass this bill for the sake of northern Ontario and for the sake of the many families throughout Ontario who need good, safe, affordable housing but cannot find any. Wood is our under-appreciated treasure, so let's use it to its full potential.

It is once again time to reassess the science and bring our building code into the 21st century. We all know that the cost of living under this government has grown by leaps and bounds, and is becoming unaffordable to the point where job creators and youth are simply crying uncle and leaving our province for greener pastures. Once again, this government missed an opportunity to change direction today, with their economic update, to put Ontario first. I believe it's time to change direction, time for the passage of this bill and time to start a new, affordable Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to be able to stand today and be in full support of the bill, put forward by the member for Nipissing, regarding looking into making wood a building material for buildings up to six storeys. It provides us with an excellent opportunity to talk about the great industry that is the forestry industry. It's gone through a tough, tough time for the last few years, but I believe it's turning the corner, and it has a great story to tell.

I'd like to start by talking about—just for a moment—Goulard Lumber in Sturgeon Falls, in my riding. They won the green business award from the chamber of commerce, and that's indicative of the lumber industry. I've got mills in Cochrane, Kirkland Lake and Elk Lake, but the great thing about the lumber industry is that it's sustainable.

I'm a farmer. I'm not in the lumber industry, but I understand it, because the only real difference is that the growing cycle is longer. Considering all the problems we've had lately with aggregate resources, the mega quarry and all those things, wood just keeps on growing. It's good for the economy, but it's good for the environment.

I'm going to be very short, but something else that this bill could do is, it will make the cost of ownership or to rent a home more affordable. That's something that we have constantly been pushing for: to make things more affordable for the average person out there. This bill has the potential to do that, because if we can make homes more affordable, it'll be better for everyone—not only more affordable, but more environmentally friendly as homes and, quite frankly, as safe as or safer than a lot of other products.

That's something we have to make sure that we look into. There are concerns out there, and part of our job is to make sure that the concerns are met. But we have to move this forward so we have a chance to look at those concerns, because so many good things could come out of this that we cannot afford—not for my riding and not for the people who would have the chance to live in these fine buildings.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Ottawa-Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to speak to Bill 13, the Ontario Forestry Industry Revitalization Act. It's really, basically, trying to take wood construction limitations from four storeys up to six storeys.

I'm pleased to add my comments as a civil engineer and as someone who has looked at—this is about jobs, and this is about the environment. It also is about safety, and I think we have people who are trying to get changes made in the building code. Wood-frame buildings have to meet the same standards as those built using other materials; I think that's what's being done.

I was invited to the National Fire Laboratory—I think that's what it's called—in Ottawa, and it was quite an experience. They had a controlled fire of a two-storey home, and they were measuring the temperatures and all that. It's quite a laboratory, and it's worth going to. I think the National Research Council's building section runs that, and I understand that our province is co-operating with them in the research that's being done with getting this new legislation through.

I commend the member for bringing this forward. I think it's really something that is good. We went around the province looking for affordable housing solutions. I remember that when I went with Jim Watson, the minister at the time, we held hearings in Ottawa. We were looking for solutions. This is one of them.

I understand that a 1,000-square-foot building, which is a small unit, can be built for about \$20,000 less if we can get into wood construction, so it's very much worth doing. I understand where the minister comes from, that we have to safeguard the emergency people that come to these buildings. With all the new materials etc., it's certainly more complex for them and it's more difficult.

So we have to make sure that that fire safety is in place for both the people that are dwelling there and the people that have to deal with these fires.

I'm glad to support this. One of the things that I wanted to mention—it was mentioned by one of the members before. It's certainly a green product, an environmentally good product. It doesn't require all of the fossil fuel inputs that steel does. It's much lower, from a point of construction, from operation, from greenhouse gas emissions.

We've gone, this summer, beyond 400 parts per million in our atmosphere with greenhouse gases, and nobody seems to be getting too concerned about it. Canada is not near meeting their targets. Ontario is not meeting their targets. No country appears to be meeting their targets. Sometimes the Chinese can't go out and even see anything. Those are the emissions that stay on the ground, the smog and the breathing problems, but what's going up in the air is colourless—the CO₂ is colourless—and we seem to forget that.

1600

It's very much worth pushing this, just from an environmental point of view, a jobs point of view and certainly the lower cost to provide housing for people.

I'm pleased to stand here today and say that we should, as a Legislature, push this as quickly as possible and make sure the safety standards are met and that the fire departments across the province have seen that the solutions are there. We'll certainly be doing something for the environment and doing something for lower-cost housing, which is extremely important, and jobs in the north—jobs are so important. Thank you, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 13 and, as the northern development and mines critic for the PC Party, to offer my support for this bill.

I would like to welcome to the Legislature Marianne Berube, who's with Wood WORKS! Ontario and who is in the members' west lounge. Welcome, Marianne. I note that they have their awards night, which is happening next week in Toronto. I attended it a few years ago, and the Charles W. Stockey Centre and the Bobby Orr Hall of Fame, which is located in Parry Sound, was one of the winners. Having attended that night, it is impressive to see what is made from wood and all the engineered wood products that are out there.

I think it's important to support this bill for the sake of the forestry sector in Ontario, especially in northern Ontario. We've seen more than 60 lumber mills close and thousands of forestry jobs disappear in the past decade. This bill will support the forestry industry in Ontario, which already supports some 200,000 jobs and more than 100 forestry-dependent communities.

I only have a short time to speak, so I'll try to go quickly, but allowing wood construction for six-storey buildings will also provide an affordable alternative for families. The estimate is a 10% to 15% savings for families. The cost savings on a 1,000-square-foot unit could average \$20,000 to \$25,000. That's from a report

written for BILD and the Ontario Home Builders' Association.

Other jurisdictions are doing this. Quebec allows six-storey buildings. BC allows six-storey buildings. There's actually a 10-storey wooden building being built in Australia. Sweden has seven-storey wooden buildings.

There are studies. The fire aspect is certainly something that should be studied. There are studies in BC, for example, done by Dr. Joseph Clare of the University of the Fraser Valley and Surrey, BC, Fire Chief Len Garis, that point out that, with the proper exterior cladding and sprinklers even on balconies—basically, their conclusion was: "The researchers have examined these concerns" about fire risk "and are unable to find evidence to substantiate these concerns." So they can be safe with the right technical standards.

As has been pointed out, there are certainly environmental benefits to having more wood construction. A typical 2,400-square-foot wood-framed house has over 28 tonnes of carbon dioxide sequestered within the wood building materials products used in the construction of the building. That is the equivalent to the carbon dioxide emissions from a single-passenger car driven for seven years, or 12,500 litres of gasoline burned, or the energy costs to operate the house for almost four years. Obviously, there are some very significant environmental benefits.

This bill is supported by many different organizations, including the Ontario Home Builders' Association. They, in fact, had a reception and a day here at Queen's Park yesterday. When I went to that and asked what their most important issue was, they said they were supporting six-storey wood frame construction buildings and the benefits for families in the province, the benefits for their industry and the benefits for the forestry sector. But it's also supported by organizations like FONOM, the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, and NOMA, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association—those organizations recognizing the benefits for northern Ontario in particular.

I'm pleased to support this bill. I do hope that it passes, goes to committee and gets the required input from concerned stakeholders so the technical aspects of it are addressed properly. I look forward to this passing and becoming the law in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's with great pride that I stand, as a prior forestry employee for a very long time. I built my life, I built my first house, I had my first mortgage and I raised my kids as a forester working in the forestry. That's how I was raised. It's basically who I am, as an individual.

When I see bills like this, Bill 13—and I hope that number is not a telltale of where this bill is going to end up. I commend the member from Nipissing for being tireless on this issue and bringing it forward. I definitely will be supporting this bill.

I'm going to bring a different aspect to the discussion today, in the limited time that I have. We talked a little

bit about how this is an affordable method, something that would make it a little bit easier, or more affordable, for communities and businesses in order to build these six-storey structures. We talked a little bit about the economics of it. We also talked about the environmental benefits.

But what it means to me is something that I've experienced over and over and over again in communities ranging from Manitouwadge to White River, Pic Mobert, Wawa, Chapleau, all along the North Shore, all along my riding: When a mill shuts down—particularly, the one that comes to mind is Dubreuilville—and they lose the one industry that they have in their community, it's devastating to families, it's devastating to the community and it's devastating to the region.

What you have to understand—something that I'm always going to bring here is a northern perspective—is that a lot of these communities are so tied into each other. A lot of them count on each other, although they're separated by, to our standards, short distances—roughly anywhere between 100 and 150 kilometres. That's close. That's an opportunity for a job and for me to work.

It's unfortunate that some of these policies, like this one here that we're talking about today, were not in place back then, when I went through, like everybody else in 2007—when the forestry industry really took a turn for the worse.

When you look at families that were basically devastated, where a husband and a wife were separated, due to the loss of these jobs that they had within the forestry sector, and where kids were taken away from their homes, that was where a policy like this would potentially have helped out.

Of course, I'm going to stand here today and support this initiative because, yes, within the last few months, within the last year or so, we can see a turn in the forestry industry. Things are coming around; things are changing; things are looking up. You hear of good-news stories, and I'll share a good-news story. The White River sawmill has just recently reopened, hiring approximately 60 people now. They're looking at establishing a second shift for that particular mill.

We had huge investment in the community of Hornepayne, where there was a biomass project that was developed there. Millions of dollars were spent there in order to sustain that particular mill and secure it.

The community of Wawa, although they lost their OSB plant, will be getting an industrial pelletization plant, which is going to be good for that community. It's not going to return the 125 jobs that were there, but it is going to return probably about 40 to 50 jobs, which are going to be able to sustain that community.

There is good news that is coming, and something like this bill will help those communities, those industries, to secure their future in order to find the markets that they're going to need to sustain those jobs in those communities.

It's also going to provide an opportunity for the communities that are looking to secure wood, for them to move forward.

Again, I'll go back to a community like Dubreuilville. Unfortunately, they're one of the ones that have been left out. They don't have a forestry licence, and they don't have the opportunity to open up that mill yet. But I know they're still trying to get going. That's the one thing about that community: "No" has never been an option to them, and they're going to continue trying to secure their fibre.

I commend the member for bringing this bill forward. Like I said, I hope the title of it, Bill 13, is not a telltale of where this bill is going to go. I encourage this government to push it forward.

1610

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure today to speak to Bill 13, the Ontario Forestry Industry Revitalization Act, and I'd like to thank the member from Nipissing for bringing this forward. I would also be remiss if I did not acknowledge the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan's original bill from 2012, entitled Bill 61, Ontario's Wood First Act, 2012. I believe that in both of these bills there are important principles that deserve our support. However, in supporting the initiative, I think we have to strike the right balance.

Bill 13 would amend the building code to allow construction of mid-rise buildings of up to six storeys. Allowing mid-rise wood buildings would be advantageous for both the wood industry and northern Ontario municipalities reliant on the industry. We agree, and believe this bill will have a positive impact on the forestry industry in Ontario.

Ontario's forestry sector reaches deep into our economy, creating thousands of jobs and building the local economies of more than 260 communities. Wood products are better for the environment than other major building materials. They consume less energy across their life cycle, contribute less to pollution and have a lighter carbon footprint.

Ontario's forests are managed to ensure the long-term health of the forest ecosystems while balancing the environmental, economic and social benefits, both now and in the future. The bill is not only about improving the forestry sector; it is about promoting smart growth.

Yesterday, I had the pleasure of meeting with Pierre Dufresne, the president of the Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association. His organization strongly supports the bill. He tells me that builders could save as much as 15% to 20% on the cost of the buildings. It would also provide for more affordable accommodations for families, more space for families. I think these changes are necessary to help kick-start mid-rise development of vacant lands and under-used lands in urban corridors, like in the city of Ottawa or the greater Golden Horseshoe.

Wood could become the natural choice for many mid-rise projects, and the province's wood industry would see an almost immediate increase in demand for its products. It will also allow for higher-density municipalities. As a result, families will benefit from the reduced cost and larger living spaces. The same type of legislation is found

in British Columbia, Quebec, Scandinavia and in numerous American states.

While I support the intent and the principles in Bill 13, our government has to make sure that we take care of the safety of Ontarians and that they're safe in their homes and in their businesses. In 2010 and 2011, when we consulted on our 2012 building code, we received a mixed reaction regarding the potential of increasing the limit on wood-frame buildings to six storeys. That is why our government is working with the National Research Council, providing a \$345,000 grant to research the use of wood in mid-rise construction.

We understand that these proposed changes could result in a boost to the forestry industry and reduce housing costs for Ontarians. We must ensure that the building code promotes growth while balancing high safety standards. Our government is always looking for flexible, innovative and affordable options for construction in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to support Bill 13. Like I said, I think we need to get a proper balance in the bill. I'm glad to support it going forward to committee. I'd like to thank the member for Nipissing for introducing this bill, and once again I would like to thank the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan for his continued work on this initiative as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a pleasure to stand and speak in favour of this bill. I know that this is something that the member from Nipissing has really had his arms wrapped around since day one, and it's very important to him and his community, as it is for most of northern Ontario and certainly other places in Ontario that depend on the wood industry and the lumber industry for jobs.

It is interesting that the increased use of wood harvested in northern Ontario for residential construction will produce a lot more jobs. We've seen 60 lumber mills close and thousands and thousands of jobs lost over the last decade or two. It is an interesting point to think that as, I think, the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane noted, it is a renewable resource. It is a slower renewable, but I think with proper planning and with responsible stewardship, it is a highly renewable resource that, if we manage it well, can actually be a great piece of our economy.

This bill not only will help the forest industry, but it has spinoff on the other industries that it helps. So not only does it help those cutting down the trees, but it helps those who are processing the lumber and it helps those who are selling the lumber or reselling the lumber and all the construction industries that are going to be building, if they didn't have lumber to use as a material before for six-storey buildings.

There are going to be lots of jobs that can be created through this bill, which is a relatively simple bill, really. These are the kinds of bills that I love because they are so simple in what they do, yet really very extreme in what they can produce. We know that wood frame construction actually reduces the carbon footprint and increases

energy efficiency in mid-rise buildings. They actually meet or surpass fire standards if they're built properly, with the proper codes and the proper technology. That's kind of an argument that takes the wind out of the sails of some of the people who might say there are some issues with the fire standards here. There certainly aren't, not if building codes are met and the proper technologies are used.

By allowing and encouraging construction of these wood frame buildings, Ontario can also respond to lower export demand for its softwood lumber and stimulate the industry in the north by creating tariff-free local markets. So we're going to have more local markets. If we allow them to use more wood to build up to six-storey buildings, it decreases the price of some of these buildings and will actually increase the amount of them that are being built, and allow them to be built, too, in denser populated areas where we need to build density—in the hearts of our cities.

It's interesting, too, that the bill is supported by so many different groups: the Ontario Home Builders' Association, FONOM, NOMA. I know I talked to the Barrie Construction Association about this, and this is something that they would wholeheartedly support. Certainly Barrie is a place where density is a big deal. We are trying to not have the same issues with sprawl as other cities that have grown as rapidly as ours, and this will really help with the affordability of housing within our city core. Certainly, that's the place where we need to attract people to live, to keep healthy cities, so our cities don't rot from the inside out, especially smaller cities like North Bay that need to make sure they don't make the same mistakes as many other cities have as they've grown rapidly over the past several years. This will help achieve all that.

At the same time—you know, we can talk about affordable housing. This is a great way to start dealing with affordable housing as well in a small way. Certainly, it will encourage more people to be able to provide that sort of housing.

I'm really proud to stand here and support this bill today, and I look forward to voting in support of it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Nipissing, you have two minutes for your response.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. I want to thank the member from Kenora—Rainy River, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the members from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, Timiskaming—Cochrane, Ottawa—Orléans, Parry Sound—Muskoka, Algoma—Manitoulin, Ottawa South and Barrie, especially the two engineers of that group who spoke in favour of this bill.

I've been an entrepreneur all my life. I've been in sales all my business life. I know one thing that you learn in sales: know when to stop selling. I will not speak any further to a winner.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I will take the vote at the end of private members' public business.

I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Berardinetti assumes ballot item number 60 and Mr. Dickson assumes ballot item number 71.

MEDICAL RECORDS

Mr. Bob Delaney: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should establish and enforce regulations pertaining to the Personal Health Information Act, 2004, subsection 54(11) with respect to fees charged for medical records, and ensure consistent billing for the Ontario harmonized sales tax.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

1620

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you again, Speaker. I'd like to start my presentation today by thanking a good lawyer. Roger Foisy of Mississauga first brought to my attention the Ontario Wild West of medical record fees and documented his concerns so thoroughly and accurately that there was no doubting either the issue or its need for resolution.

Roger is the kind of guy who gives lawyers a good name. Others, both patients and those acting on their behalf, have come forward in the past year to speak about their experiences as well.

I also need to acknowledge some special people on my staff. Much of the research for this resolution and what it could accomplish was done by my former legislative assistant, Jessica MacInnis, and I especially thank Jessica. Her successor, Cassandra George, finished the job for me and compiled much of the information to which I will refer. Cassandra is at home recovering from a recent accident, and from the floor of the Legislature, Cassandra, I thank you and I hope you're watching.

My executive assistant Andrzej Hoffmann made sure everybody stayed on task and met their deadlines. Thanks also go to my office staff: Humaira Hamayun—at home recovering from chemotherapy—Monika Duggal and Magnolia Ma.

The issue to be debated today concerns how much a doctor, clinic, therapist, pharmacy or other entity that holds a patient's medical records can charge that patient, or someone acting on behalf of the patient, for access to the patient's medical or health records. Professional colleges are too often either silent on the subject or vague if they have any guidelines on billing for medical records.

In March 2006, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care drafted a regulation to limit fees charged to a patient, or to his or her assigns, to a maximum of \$40 for all such records held by a provider. Though published in the Ontario Gazette, the regulation was neither adopted nor enforced.

The Ontario Medical Association publishes a Physician's Guide to Third Party and Other Uninsured Services, to provide OMA member doctors with what it calls "guidance" on uninsured and third party services, suggested fees, relevant policies and interpretation of regulations that govern the charging of fees for access to patient records. But like all other such voluntary standards, it is not mandatory. It means nothing in practice, and physicians and other holders of medical records are pretty much free to do whatever they want.

Fees to access medical records have become a lucrative revenue sideline for some doctors and others who have custody of a patient's health information. Note the word "custody." The health professional has already been paid, or has collected a fee, to provide the service and document the information. All that's been requested from them, most of the time, is a copy of what they already have, and if their practice is properly computerized, that information comes in the form of a query that is both quick and may often be very cheap to produce.

The OMA's guideline says physicians are prohibited from charging a fee without first giving an estimate of the fee. The OMA suggests \$30, plus 25 cents per page for each sheet above and beyond 20 pages. As well, a physician can ethically charge for out-of-pocket disbursements, if any are incurred, for shipment, long-distance faxing and other expenses of a similar nature. If, and only if, the physician must review the records before providing copies, may he or she bill at the normal hourly rate.

As written, that's reasonable; in practice, it's anything but. Let's provide a few egregious examples that set the stage for why the OMA, pharmacists, clinics, therapists and others have failed their patients and why this issue is on the floor of the Ontario Legislature.

I looked at a 2011 invoice to provide 29 pages of notes from a provider called ICC HealthNet. They billed \$350 for the service, plus HST. That's \$12.07 a page. And here's the galling part of it: The Canada Revenue Agency considers "the preparation and transfer of medical records" to be HST-exempt and GST-exempt too. In July 2013, CA firm Grant Thornton confirmed this.

So what's happening to the HST when it is billed to the patient? Is it being incorrectly remitted to the Canada Revenue Agency, or is it just being pocketed by the records provider? That, too, is likely all over the map.

Southdown Chiropractic in Mississauga charged \$120 for nine pages of records: \$13.33 a page. At least they didn't ding the poor patient for the HST. Neurologist Marvin Goldman of Scarborough charged \$125 for just five pages of medical records and notes: \$25 per page. In Brampton, family medicine practitioner Dr. Malar Gopinath billed \$150 for five pages of clinical notes and records: \$30 a page. Shoppers Drug Mart on Creditview Road in Mississauga billed \$100 for just three pages of notes and then wrongly added both GST and HST to the total. That's \$33.33, before taxes, per page.

How about this one? Oakville Plastic Surgery's Dr. Nancy de Kleer just last month hit up a patient \$500 for a five-page printout of records; that's \$100 a page. A

diagnostic clinic's 25-page printout cost \$190. A Scarborough doctor's six pages of records cost \$350.

The list of hundreds of these examples I've accumulated just goes on and on, and it has got to stop. Ontario's patients are not sheep to be shorn. The lawyers and insurance companies that act for those patients have to pass along these costs to their clients. Just as there is only one taxpayer, there is only one patient, who only has one chequebook.

We need the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to revisit this unproclaimed regulation, set an affordable and reasonable cap for the first 20 pages and set a fair per-page charge thereafter. We need the ministry to establish that where out-of-pocket disbursements are billed, they must be billed at actual cost and specify exactly what hourly rates can be billed for compiling this paperwork. If the compilation is done by staff, those hours must be billed at the staff rate, not the physician's rate.

We need this regulation to have some teeth, which means sanctions for gouging the patient and those acting on a patient's behalf. We also need an appeals process to the various colleges which, along with the OMA, have to become much more prescriptive about the practice of billing for medical records. And to be fair to health providers, we need clarity for physicians and other health providers on the tax status—or, in this case, the lack thereof—of billing for the transfer of medical records.

Ontario does, however, have at least one area of best practices to emulate. Hospitals appear to be the good actors in this little practice. Their very reasonable fees and expense recovery practices should be a good starting point for the ministry and for the various colleges.

In common law, a medical or hospital record is not owned by the patient, though the provider has been paid to compile and document that record. In several provinces, legislation and statutory regulations codify that while the record is owned by the entity that compiles it, a patient has a right of reasonable—which also means economical, timely and fair—access to those records.

Alberta's legislation and regulations set out, in concise and adequate detail, what is covered by medical records and what can be charged for access to them. Quebec prohibits charging a fee for access, though Quebec does allow what it terms a reasonable charge for transcription, reproduction and transmission of the information.

Nova Scotia's policies are embedded in legislation, which makes them harder to change with the times and technology, as information access prices should be falling. The legislation in Nova Scotia is quite specific, down to the amounts that can be billed to a patient or someone acting for that patient.

New Brunswick has possibly the right blend of the intent and the policy written into legislation, and the specifics and fees contained in regulation. If it were me, I would be modelling what Ontario ought to do on the Alberta and New Brunswick models.

Speaker, this issue does not need to go to committee, nor does it need any extensive public or stakeholder consultation. But what Ontario does need to do is to update,

proclaim and expand its regulation and enforce the regulation, and insist that the various professional colleges issue specific and helpful policies to their members.

1630

If necessary, Ontario needs a mechanism to go after the bad actors with a big-enough stick to recover inappropriate billings going back, let's say, two or three years, and to have strong-enough sanctions in place to give pause to any provider who forgets that he or she is in the patient treatment business and wants to view document production as a lucrative profit centre.

Speaker, I thank you for your time to bring to the Legislature an issue that I found to be disturbing. I tend to assume the best of the people who provide us care. We realize that when we go in to see a health service provider, we are very much in their hands. When the time comes to recover the information that the provider has generated on our behalf, it had been my assumption that this would be done in a transparent, timely and economical fashion. I was unpleasantly surprised to discover that this is not so.

I would hope that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care will pay attention to the proceedings of the debate this afternoon, and proclaim and enforce a regulation that will bring clarity to this process.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm proud to rise today and give my two cents to this debate on the motion for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to enforce its own regulations.

I will concur that there is a problem in the system. As a pharmacist, I saw it—daily, in fact. Lawyers involved in lawsuits, mainly with auto insurance, would send me a letter saying, "I'd like a profile of so-and-so patient with the proper consent forms sent with it. Please send your bill along with the papers."

The first time I received one such letter, I called the lawyer and said, "We've never charged for this service. What do you mean, 'Send a bill'?" They said, "You can bill us whatever price you want. It doesn't matter, because we'll just take that money and charge it to the consumer, or whatever comes out at the end of the day." I was really quite shocked at the fact that they didn't care what we billed. It was a learning experience for me.

A lot of the pharmacies that I know of in our area don't really charge for this service problem going on.

It is a problem, though, with our medical practitioners who are leaving town. Elgin-Middlesex-London has a huge shortage of doctors in our area, and when they leave town for various reasons, they tend to always head to the Toronto area. Patients are left with a notice saying, "Please contact this outsourced company that's holding the records"—and to get that record for the patient, they have to pay a fee. I'm sure that because of the patients that these doctors are caring for when they do leave and because of the shortage—for them to themselves handle the fact of disseminating their records, they of course put in a third party, which probably increases the fee that they are charging.

On average, a few years ago it was about \$200 a patient to get their records from the doctor. So it is a hardship for patients who do come in. They want their medical records as soon as possible, because they have to go to the local walk-in clinic or emergency department for a renewal on their prescription, because, as I said, there are no doctors in our area, coming to St. Thomas or Elgin county. The fact that they don't really have the money to pay upfront begs the question—they always ask, "Well, whose records are these, anyway? Are they mine? Are they the doctor's?" So I think that's a good discussion to have.

The fact that this motion has come forward to discuss a regulation that's already in place begs the question of, why isn't the Minister of Health doing her job and actually proclaiming that regulation and having her staff go ahead and do it? I don't know why someone in her own caucus can't walk over to her and say, "This is a problem in our province," and have the Minister of Health proclaim that regulation and do her job. There are two members in this House sitting here—Etobicoke North and Oak Ridges—Markham—who probably would do a fine job as Minister of Health, and I'm sure they would have proclaimed that regulation, had Mr. Delaney offered that suggestion to them, if they were Minister of Health.

I just want to throw this plug in: As there are discussions going on of problems that are occurring in the health care system, I do think it's time for the government to review its Ontario drug benefit reimbursement policy. You're seeing it more and more, with Avastin; there's the drug Esbriet—there are so many new medications coming into the marketplace with a high cost, because science and technology have really increased and we're now producing medications and treating diseases that we never thought could ever be treated before, with a high cost.

The current system is dated. We need to relook at how these new medications will be reimbursed, because there are too many people going without at a higher cost than paying for their medical records.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm rising today to speak to this notice of motion from the member from Mississauga—Streetsville around the issue of medical files and how you get medical files from your physicians when they retire or how you get medical records from a number of places when you need them, perhaps to apply for Ontario disability support or Ontario Works. The problem is that there is no consistency in the process or in the pricing.

But my first question is, I don't understand why a government member is calling upon their own government in a motion to do something. Just do it. It doesn't take this House to change a regulation, so why isn't the government just doing this?

This issue has been on the books since 2006. For all these years, people have been paying huge amounts of money for files—

Ms. Catherine Fife: To private medical companies.

Ms. Cindy Forster: —to private medical companies, to warehouses that are warehousing files when physicians

perhaps suddenly leave due to illness or some other reason. I've got stories that I can tell you that go back to 2006, just from the records that my staff pulled.

I have called upon the government—actually, before I was even sworn in, my first official duty was calling upon the Minister of Health to deal with this issue, because a physician in my riding left 1,800 patients without a physician. All of them were scurrying to get their records.

I had a woman—Vivian was her name—and actually, it was my own family doctor, so this is kind of interesting, because I just happened to have a visit to my family doctor before she retired. She said she was retiring, and I said, "Oh, good. Okay, that's fine. So what's the process?" And they said, "You just have to sign this form. We'll give you your file." They didn't even copy it. "Here's your file. Take it with you to your new doctor. Who's going to be your doctor?" I said, "Okay. It's going to be my husband's doctor." He had a different doctor than I did.

It was so simple. There was no payment; there was no reason for a payment. I just got my file and I took it to the next doctor—end of story.

Yet this Vivian tells me that when she went to get her file, of course, the doctor's office was already closed. Her file had been transferred to a physician who wasn't going to be her physician but who was kind of looking after these files. From Vivian, they wanted \$35 plus another, I don't know, \$1.45 or \$1.55 a page. They wanted \$435 from Vivian for the same file transfer that cost me zero.

These issues have been going on for seven years; they continue to go on. The response that I got from Minister Matthews, the Minister of Health, at the time was, "Well, yes, we understand that these issues are out there, but we're going to tell you to refer your constituent to the privacy commissioner, and maybe she can do something about this." That's the rhetoric that we get.

This is a very simple issue. All you have to do is pass some regulation. I don't really know why you would waste your slot, as a government member, calling upon your own government to do something.

We hear regulations get changed every day in this place. In fact, a lot of them, we don't even ever know about. Regulations change, and a year later, we'll find out from somebody, "Oh, well, the government changed that regulation." They didn't notify any of us that they changed it, but in fact they did.

I don't know why the member can't just walk across the floor to the minister and say, "Minister, have your cabinet, or your council of cabinet, go and do the right thing."

I have a story about a nurse that I represented when I was working for the Ontario Nurses' Association. I was doing her LTD appeal. As I was reviewing that file, I found that she was missing about 12 years, when I was trying to tell her story to get her benefits reinstated. I had to go and find that file in a warehouse somewhere, and they charged me \$1,800 to get that piece of this nurse's file. She didn't have any money. Thankfully, she had a

union that had some money, and her union, the Ontario Nurses' Association, went out and paid \$1,800 for that file so that I could complete the LTD appeal and actually get that woman's benefits reinstated.

1640

I just say, at the end of this, I think it's very important that you just change the regulation and you forget about the motion. Let's just get this done for the people who live in this province who are struggling day to day. They don't need to be paying \$400 and \$500 and \$800 and \$1,800 for medical records that are all about them. It's compromising people's ability to get ODSP. It's compromising people's ability to get Ontario Works, because the first thing they ask you for is that medical file; that's what you need to get that. So you have people out there in shelters, waiting to get their ODSP because they can't get their medical file because they don't have any money to pay for that file. It's ridiculous—and you know what? You're the government. You need to get on with doing this one little task. It shouldn't take years and years to do this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jacek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm certainly very pleased to support the motion brought forward by my colleague the member from Mississauga–Streetsville. Obviously, I also share the need for us to move forward in this particular regard, and there's nothing better than collective action. This is really an opportunity for all of us to get together the way our constituents would want us to. I certainly look forward to the successful passage of this particular motion, which, obviously, I support.

A number of bodies have expressed their opinions on what sorts of charges should be levied in terms of the transfer of personal medical records from one health custodian to another, but the fact is that currently, the Personal Health Information Protection Act, or PHIPA, has no fee schedule. In fact, it was in 2008, when I was a member of the Standing Committee on Social Policy, that we reviewed PHIPA. We were informed at that time—it was a number of years ago—by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care that they had published in the Ontario Gazette in 2006 a fee for accessing medical records, which has a base of \$30, with a few prescribed additional costs allowable.

We do know that that particular regulation proposed was never adopted. I can only assume it was an oversight, because clearly, something is necessary. So essentially, there is no regulation that currently exists.

We did hear back in 2008 from the ARCH Disability Law Centre about the impact that high fees can have on individuals with disabilities, who often have limited income and lengthy medical records. During the committee hearing, I in fact asked a question of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care about the concerns raised by ARCH. I was informed by the ministry that they needed to do a certain amount of education of all stakeholders as to the proposed regulation.

The committee did, in fact, feel strongly that there should be a regulation that sets fees charged by health information custodians for the disclosure of personal health information. However, unfortunately, that recommendation was not adopted.

With regard to physicians, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario does stipulate that fees should be charged in the amounts prescribed by the regulation—that we know does not exist—or the amount of reasonable cost recovery; and further, physicians are encouraged to consider the patient's financial circumstances and ability to pay when determining the appropriate fee.

There is also, as has already been discussed, the OMA physician's guide for uninsured services. As my colleague detailed, this does include a potential fee for professional review to be billed at the physician's hourly rate. It's clearly the latter part of that formula that has been a problem.

In October 2010, the Information and Privacy Commissioner's office reviewed a complaint where a physician charged a patient \$125 for their medical records. When the Information and Privacy Commissioner compared the OMA's method to the proposed regulation by the Ministry of Health, it found that, under those proposed regulations, the charge should have been \$33.50.

It's time—certainly more than time—that we act on this. Hopefully the collective wisdom of this House will persuade the appropriate action to take place.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to join in the debate here on the proposal put forward by the member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

It's interesting how passionately members of the government caucus can argue in favour of a position that has been put forward many times. In fact, the last time in this place that I recall that a private member's bill was put forward on this very issue was from a former Minister of Health, Mr. David Caplan. It was a private member's bill put forward in September 2010. His private member's bill actually went far beyond what this member is proposing, because Mr. Caplan proposed that there should be no fees. He argued that these are the medical records of patients; they are their records and, quite frankly, if they need them for whatever purpose, they should be delivered. That was David Caplan.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: What happened to David Caplan?

Mr. Frank Klees: What happened to David Caplan?

Interjection.

Mr. Frank Klees: He's no longer here. Minister of Health—he got thrown under the bus; that's what happened, and he's no doubt watching this. He, today, if he wants his medical records, has to pay for them.

Here is what one Dalton McGuinty said when he was asked—this is on May 17, 2011. Dalton McGuinty said this about whether or not people should have to pay for their medical records: "I'm just saying nothing more and nothing less than what I said." How about that? Dalton McGuinty. Where's Dalton McGuinty today? Where is

he on this important issue? I can tell you—probably one of the most brilliant statements that a Premier of this province has ever made.

I'll tell you this: This member, with all due respect—I have the greatest regard for the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, but let's listen to what Ann Cavoukian had to say. This is our privacy commissioner. This goes back to May 17, 2011, as well. This is not news that we're debating this here. What's news—actually, it's not news—is that we're debating old stuff that should have been dealt with years ago; even the privacy commissioner said, "By the way, you've got a problem here."

Here is what the privacy commissioner said should be charged, if anything at all. This was someone who was going to be charged \$350 for their medical records, and Cavoukian's office revised the fee to \$33.50: \$30 for the first 20 pages, including about 15 minutes of time for a doctor to review the information, and 25 cents thereafter.

That is from our own privacy commissioner. The member wants to have a little more discussion about what should be charged; it's all here. Here's my position. It's private members' business, so I'm speaking for myself; I'm not speaking for anyone else. I don't believe there should be one cent charged for my medical records. They're my medical records, and if I want them I should have them.

As far as I'm concerned, the member is way off base. He's just part of the big conspiracy to continue to charge people for things they shouldn't be charged for. Tax-and-spend Liberals: That's all they are. Look, let's clean it up. You have a medical record. It's yours. You want it? Make a phone call, and you get it; no charges.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: It's a pleasure to be able to support this motion today, I have to say, but I find it incredible, like others, that we need to have this motion. There's a problem here with respect to fees being paid and charged for medical records, because there are no rules about how much Ontarians must have to pay to get copies of their own medical records.

1650

You know, we've heard it several times in this House, and it makes absolute sense: Why would a person have to pay for their own medical records when the doctors of this province are already being paid a fee through our OHIP system? It just does not make sense that this is happening. But I'm happy that it's here before us and the discussion is happening, because we need to do something to move this forward.

Among other things, the maximum amount of fees a custodian can charge an individual for providing access to personal health records is prescribed, but for some reason, they chose not to enforce it—we were already addressing this very issue back in 2006. That decision has had a serious impact on the people who need those records, often people who don't have the money to pay for them. I have some stories from constituents in my riding of Hamilton Mountain.

Rick came into my office. He's an injured worker who doesn't have a union to represent him with the WSIB. He was appealing a decision of the WSIB, but how can he be expected to do that when he cannot afford his file? He can't work due to his injury, he has no income, and he's in a no-win situation because he cannot get access to his records.

Heather is a senior citizen. Her doctor retired, and the doctor's patients were not transferred to another doctor. She needs medication but has been unable to find another doctor, so she has to go to a walk-in clinic. But her file cannot be transferred without her paying for it. As a senior on a fixed income, she finds it difficult to make ends meet at the best of times, without this extra expense.

Tommy Douglas built a health care system in Saskatchewan that would ensure that every person was guaranteed access to health care that they needed, no matter how much money they had. What Tommy built was copied all across Canada, and the federal government set about building a public health care system that put patient care first, that didn't turn people away because they couldn't afford it. It was something we were all proud of, something we would point to and know that it set us apart from our neighbours to the south. But now we are losing that, little by little, bit by bit. Too often we hear about health care not being fully accessible to people with low incomes because of increases to user fees.

I've already spoken about people who can't get the care they need because they can't afford the fees to access their records. Another example would be parking fees, which are a problem, not just in remote areas, but in urban areas. Often, people who need health care are not fit enough to walk any distance or take public transit, and they need to drive or be driven. But the parking fees at hospitals can sometimes be outrageous amounts that people can't afford. I say "sometimes be outrageous amounts," because those fees vary all across the province. Again, there's no consistency. It's the same for fees that are being charged for access to people's records: There's no consistency across this province, there's no consistency across health providers and there's no consistency across clinical settings.

This motion to establish and enforce regulations with respect to fees charged for medical records would fix that, for setting maximums and consistent billings. It wouldn't eliminate the fees, which is unfortunate, but it would be a step in the right direction.

As I said at the start, it's a pity that we need to have this discussion, and it seems to me that the government recognized the problem years ago, moved to fix it but then dropped it. Yes, there is a section of the Personal Health Information Protection Act that says a fee should not exceed "the amount of reasonable cost recovery." We all know that "reasonable" is open to interpretation. What we end up with are wildly different views of what that is, and that is not responsible. So we have no standard fee, and that's a problem we're trying to fix.

I'm happy to support this motion, but my expectation of it actually changing anything is, unfortunately, very

limited. The government does not need to act on this motion even if it has unanimous consent of this House. It will be interesting to see how many members across the floor will vote in favour of their colleague the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, because they can fix it, but will they?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I rise in support of my honourable colleague Bob Delaney, Mississauga–Streetsville MPP, in my capacity as a physician as well as a parliamentarian. I would commend him for attempting to bring some equity, some clarity, some transparency and accountability to this whole issue of physicians transferring medical records, whether it's to another physician, another clinic, out of country, across the globe or to another institution for treatment.

I would say there's probably a number of aspects that we must consider. As has been mentioned, physicians are the custodians, but patients are the ultimate owners of their record. Having said that, there are some very stringent rules with the College of Physicians and Surgeons that, for example, doctors must not only document well and document sort of in real time, but they're custodians even after the patient leaves their practice for, I think, up to 10 years. So there is a certain administrative burden, especially if you've been in practice 10, 20 years-plus, whether it's in terms of storage or filing systems. Then, of course, what often happens is one to two years later or, let's say, several months after the patient has left or is seeking higher care elsewhere, say in a tertiary or quaternary centre, we have to actually go and retrieve those records. So it's not a simple matter where the particular record in question is sitting in the physician's drawer, they just open that drawer and hand it over.

I think it is reasonable, for example, to follow the Ontario Medical Association guidelines in their physician's guide to uninsured services. Before I mention what their particular numbers are, what I might just add is that if you really want to bring some equity, maybe we should approach the Ministry of Health and have this become an insured service where the actual number is specified, codified and based on a per-page basis, and we can agree upon that particular fee.

The other thing I might just add as well is that often it's not just a matter of "Here's your key 70 pages or 170 pages of your life." Often, for example, the doctor is asked to write a summary sheet of what is going on because no receiving clinic, be it for cancer care, rehabilitation care, WSIB—they don't want to read those 170 pages, I can assure you. They would much prefer having a physician give a one- or two-page summary, and that is often as part of this fee.

For example, let's say it's a patient of 10 years. That's a pretty thick file, obviously depending on the number of illnesses, the number of interactions, tests ordered, CT scans, MRIs, consult notes from other specialists and so on. That could easily reach 200, 300, 400 pages, and if

the physician is obligated to, first of all, go through that, write a summary sheet—these are the key issues. These are, by the way, the list of medications. These are allergies. These are some treatment options that have been tried previously that did not work. Here are things that have actually led to negative reactions. Oh, by the way, here was a depression episode, be careful, and so on—little warnings to the future treating team. That, of course, involves the physician's due diligence, time, effort, blood, sweat, tears. I think, when the physician is busy practising medicine, they really don't want to be having this kind of administrative burden, so it's only fair that there should be some compensation involved.

Hippocrates, the father of medicine, 5th century BC, Greece, said, "Life is short, the art so long." Well, along with the art being so long, occasionally medical records are as well. It's not uncommon to have medical records which are now sitting in the physician's offices as tomes, as volumes, now in volume 3. And as was rightly mentioned, sometimes those anterior records, foregoing records of let's say five or 10 years, are off-site. So the physician is then obligated to have an external agency or one of those storage facilities actually house those medical records.

There are many, many moving parts to this. It's not just a simple issue of "Here's the record. I'm not giving it to you unless you give me an egregious fee. It's sitting in my drawer. Otherwise, you're welcome to it."

The other thing I would just mention is that, as I mentioned, the Ontario Medical Association has a very well-thought-out physician's guide to uninsured services. Again, it's a guideline. Some physicians will bill less and some physicians will bill more.

1700

Of course, the point of the guideline is that it should be within one to two standard deviations, meaning not a big outlier where a patient, as was mentioned earlier by my colleague from Mississauga–Streetsville, is being charged ridiculous sums for a 10-page report. But it says something like \$30 for the first 20 pages and 25 cents per page afterward. There may be some other administrative costs. For example, if a secretary has to take, let's say, 20 minutes or half an hour, there may be a cost to that tacked on. If there's a summary letter that the physician is required to create from a new cognitive interaction with the file, that is also, presumably, a billable expense.

Having said that, I think it is very commendable that my colleague from Mississauga–Streetsville, as I said earlier, brings some accountability, equity and transparency to this entire portfolio. As was mentioned, we probably ought to revisit some of our own existing regulations and update them, at least with the cost-of-living allowance built in, inflation etc., with medical records.

Just before closing, I might say that most of this stuff might go away if we all moved to an EMR, an electronic medical record, where we can probably push a button or hand over the entire file on a memory key. Thanks for the memories.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm fairly certain I'm not going to be able to match the comments that were made a few moments ago by my colleague the member from Newmarket–Aurora, but I am happy to have the opportunity to make a few comments of my own.

I certainly am in favour of the resolution that has been brought forward by the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, but like many of the previous speakers, I find it rather curious that we're really even having to debate this. This should be done simply by regulation; it should be handled internally. But like a lot of things that go on around here at Queen's Park that seem to be no-brainers, as they say, for some reason things don't happen. I get stakeholders that come to see me on a regular basis and they'll say, "It's so obvious this should be done." Well, nothing is really obvious around here, I guess. So I hope this does happen as a result of the debate today and that we are able to move this forward.

What we've been talking about is that the resolution speaks about the Personal Health Information Protection Act, subsection 54(11), that talks about how "The amount of the fee shall not exceed the prescribed amount or the amount of reasonable cost recovery, if no amount is prescribed." Of course, we're dealing with a situation where there is no regulation, and we're certainly hearing a lot of stories from patients across the province that the fees being charged are not being charged on a reasonable cost-recovery basis. Some patients are being charged exorbitant fees of upwards of \$20 to \$50 per page.

The member from Etobicoke North was speaking about having \$30 for the first 20 pages and something like 25 cents per page thereafter. That seems reasonable and in line with what the Information and Privacy Commissioner has said. I think there should also be a provision for those people who are unable to pay those fees—people who are on ODSP, for example. We should be cognizant of the fact that even that amount is too much for people to pay.

I think it's not unrealistic or unreasonable that there should be some cost recovery, because it does cost to photocopy these documents. If there are summaries and so on that have to be prepared, I certainly understand that. But it has to be reasonable, and I think that's what we're talking about here—especially for patient recovery. In my role previous to being elected here, as a lawyer doing some work in the personal injury area, there was always a history of charging for the production of medical records from doctors' offices, but it was always on a very nominal, cost-per-page basis. We certainly don't want to see exorbitant amounts being passed along to the people who are ultimately going to be recovering amounts in lawsuits and so on. It just jacks up the cost to all of us.

The other issue that we're dealing with here is the fact that some people are also not being charged HST. In cases where there are fees being charged, we need to make sure that if fees are going to be charged, HST is charged consistently across the board.

In closing—I know there's not very much time left and there's another speaker—I would certainly concur

with what the member from Etobicoke North has said to indicate that having a properly functioning system of electronic medical records would do away with a lot of the issues that we're facing here. I would urge the government to get on with it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It gives me great pleasure to speak on behalf of my residents of Don Valley East on this motion. I want to thank the member for his advocacy on this issue and bringing this important issue forward, protecting the rights not only of constituents from his riding but people throughout the province of Ontario.

The issue here is pretty simple: When a caregiver, a patient, a family, employers, lawyers or anyone attempts to retrieve documents pertaining to medical records, they are usually charged a fee by a clinic, a doctor or a pharmacy. The problem is, these fees vary. We did hear from different members about the different regulation that's there, and the fact that it needs to be enforced. There needs to be some more clarity.

As I was researching this issue I found an interesting story in the *Globe and Mail* about a lady from Thunder Bay who was recently charged \$600 for her medical records, which I thought was really an extreme price to charge. I know that it's not all doctors, clinics and pharmacies that are charging these numbers; for my doctor, when I transferred doctors, it was about a \$40 fee.

I think that some standardization would be a great thing for this province. In fact, as I was reading more and doing a bit more research, I came across an article from the *Law Times*. It was interesting. It's from January 2012. It was talking about how pharmacists were charging, for one-page prescriptions, \$75 to \$150, which I think was obviously a bit too much for one page.

I want to take this opportunity to talk about how, as we currently go further into the digital age and we embed our society more into the digital age, I think there will be more opportunity to make this process much easier. In fact, since 2005, we've gone from just under one million people on digital health records to nearly nine million. By 2015, every person in Ontario will be on a digital medical record, which will make it easier for the transfer of data between patients and doctors.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Mississauga–Streetsville, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I am pleased to see how many people had such interesting and helpful things to say.

To my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London: I want to thank him for his suggestions on how this issue affects patients in smaller centres, and for discussing what happens when your doctor moves.

To my colleague from Welland: Sometimes it does take a debate in the Legislature to light a fire under the Ministry of Health bureaucrats and staff. We have developed this resolution in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health, and now I think this debate will empower and prod them to take action with our impending approval of this resolution.

To my colleague from Oak Ridges–Markham: She points out that, as a physician, she too ran into the inertia of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and shared some of my feelings that, as members, this is the way we empower ourselves, and this is the way we as members act in government.

To my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora: I'm going to have to watch that Conservative bus. I really don't know how it's going to get into first gear with all the bodies the PC Party seems to have thrown under it. My thanks to a borrow-and-spend Conservative for his comments.

To my colleague from Hamilton Mountain: There is a very clear and consistent body of law and jurisprudence that concludes that the medical record is the property of the health provider, which is why we are discussing fair, timely and affordable access to the record contents by the patient.

To my colleague from Etobicoke North: He points out the day-to-day reality of the task of producing a record, from the perspective of an MD who deals with this issue personally. His Hansard, I think, will be very valuable to the ministry.

I very much agree with my colleague from Whitby–Oshawa that it's obvious that something must be done. The insight provided here deals with the what, when and how.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 55, standing in the name of Mr. Crack.

Mr. Crack has moved private member's notice of motion number 48. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

1710

ONTARIO FORESTRY INDUSTRY REVITALIZATION ACT (HEIGHT OF WOOD FRAME BUILDINGS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA REVITALISATION DE L'INDUSTRIE FORESTIÈRE DE L'ONTARIO (HAUTEUR DES BÂTIMENTS À OSSATURE DE BOIS)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Fedeli has moved second reading of Bill 13, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 with respect to the height of wood frame buildings.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I think I heard a couple of noes.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the notion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Fedeli.
Mr. Victor Fedeli: SCOFEA, please, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance. Agreed? Agreed.

MEDICAL RECORDS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Delaney has moved private member's notice of motion number 47.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WASTE REDUCTION ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES DÉCHETS

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 5, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to establish a new regime for the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 91, Loi créant un nouveau cadre pour la réduction, la réutilisation et le recyclage des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le racheminement des déchets.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: This is an interesting bill. It's certainly full of some interesting possibilities.

It's a great sleight of hand that the Liberals are pulling here. They claim they're taking steps to actually meet our demands to scrap eco taxes, but they're actually attempting to force businesses to bury these expensive levies in the cost of their products or to display them on price tags instead of receipts. So it's even harder; it's less transparent and less open. We hear so much about transparency and openness from this government, yet we don't see much action on it.

What they don't want you to know, Speaker, is that Bill 91 continues each and every eco tax program. That means that Ontario consumers still have to pay eco taxes on tires, electronics, and household hazardous materials like paint cans and batteries. The only difference will be a higher price or an eco tax displayed on the price tag in the store itself, on the store shelf instead of the receipt at the cash register. This isn't change. It's a shell game, and we see a lot of these from this government, a lot of shell games to ensure all the Liberals' eco tax revenue will continue to be funneled into the recycling bureaucracy, which costs Ontario consumers hundreds of millions of dollars per year.

It is interesting that they seem frustrated that we actually want to debate and talk about this bill a little bit. I've had numerous employers in my own riding, chief among them Coca-Cola, which is a very large employer in Barrie, that are very concerned about what this will cost their business and the effect it will have on their ability to employ people in my riding.

Special-interest groups have been pressuring members of this House to stop debating this bill. I got elected to come here and do exactly that: come and debate these bills and represent the interests of my constituents, the local businesses and the local workers in my economy who need these jobs.

This can cost a lot of jobs in almost all of our ridings. We can't stop representing the voices of our constituents in the democratic process. I'm certainly not going to do that and I've never stood down from representing the interests of my constituents in this House. That's what we were sent here to do. In fact, one of the tenets of parliamentary democracy is the ability to represent our constituents to the best of our ability and to be their voice here in this House.

We know that this bill will create half a billion dollars in new costs for businesses that produce certain materials, including Coca-Cola. Like I said, it has quite a large bottling facility in my riding. If this bill passes, how many people in my riding are going to lose their jobs? How many people in all of your ridings are going to lose their jobs as a direct result of this bill going through?

I don't think it has been thought out well enough. I think this is just another shell game, window-dressing type bill that sounds good but really isn't going to accomplish what it needs to accomplish. In fact, it's going to destroy jobs along the way. That's not good enough. I think my constituents deserve an answer. They deserve an answer from this government, and they deserve it today. Frankly, they deserve it as soon as possible.

Without telling the public, in fact, I think the Liberals actually raised the eco tax on big-screen TVs earlier this year by more than 40%, bringing the total levy to \$40.

The Liberals also targeted Ontario's hard-working farmers with massive tire tax hikes this year. I've heard this from numerous members in this House who have a farming background themselves. In fact, the environment minister himself raised the eco tax on John Deere combine tires to \$823 each, up from 92 bucks. These are people who are looking to make a living. It's already difficult enough for many of our farmers to provide all of you with the food that you eat every day. And then we are going to hit them with a tire tax on their tractors that is so exorbitant? It's not a jobs plan. This is killing jobs.

Still, without a real plan for the economy—and we saw that today. I think they recognized there's a problem—at least that's what we got out of it—and you need to build our economy. That's about all I heard from the minister today: "Let's build the economy." Well, I think we agree with you on that. But really, the question is, how are you going to do it? Are you going to do it by raising taxes secretly? Are you going to do it by creating all these different shell games and nice window dressing?

You know what? People aren't buying it anymore. You've had 10 years to fix it. You haven't done it. It's time to get down to business.

You claimed that continuing eco taxes—don't mind the cost of the Blue Box Program—creating new taxes for Ontario consumers will lead to more jobs. Really? You can't tax your way into jobs. You can't spend your way into jobs either, which is what you seem to be intent on doing. It truly is sad to see that the best jobs strategy this government can come up with is taking a full half a billion dollars out of Ontario's manufacturing sector every year in order to subsidize a few green jobs. This is the same risky economic theory the Liberals used for the Green Energy Act, which we know has completely collapsed and is causing more problems, costing more jobs than we even thought it would, Speaker. It's going to cost this province thousands of manufacturing jobs, and this on top of it is just—it seems like there's no sense of reality about what's really going on out there.

Still, for some reason, the Liberals actually think that to create jobs in the recycling industry, they need to revert back to the same risky economic theory and kill even more jobs in Ontario's manufacturing sector, which we need to come back in ridings like mine.

Barrie, I know, used to have a very vibrant blue-collar industry. We used to have several plants, whether it was General Tire or whether it was Molson—many people enjoyed Molson Park over the years. It's no longer there. It's an empty field. I think I mentioned General Tire. Tambrands used to be there. Bombardier used to be there. They're all gone—all gone for low-paying retail jobs, and it has all happened in the last 10 years.

What's even worse is the NDP supports the Liberals' reckless plan to saddle Ontario's manufacturing sector with another half a billion dollars in costs because it sounds nice, even at the price of killing good jobs in factories in cities like Hamilton and London and Kitchener and Barrie. This is unacceptable. It's unacceptable. The government shouldn't sacrifice jobs in one sector to create them in another. We've seen this happen on a number of different occasions. The horse racing industry might even be a great example of that, as well. It should create the right conditions for economic growth.

Governments don't really create jobs, do they? Governments create the environment that jobs are created within. We need to enable our employers to be the employers that have 20—it's great to see the employers that have five, 10, 15 people today be the employers that have 100 people tomorrow and the next year and the next year, instead of placing in front of them impediments like taxes that are getting hidden here and there and all over the place, and not being really truthful with them. It's hard for a new business person.

By the way, almost 75% of all the people who are employed in Ontario are employed by businesses with four or less employees. So, really, small business is big business in Ontario. These are the people that these sorts of fees really affect. These are the people that are going to be the employers of tomorrow.

I know that Moore Packaging in Barrie now employs 400 to 500 people. It started in a garage with two people, a husband-and-wife team.

Southmedic started with a nurse who had a great idea for disposable medical instruments, and now they've parlayed that into one of the only companies worldwide that can provide disposable medical instruments for the medical industry.

These are the businesses we need to encourage and help grow. Things like these eco fees are just one example of many hidden fees and regulations and costly impediments to businesses' growth. We need to do more to help them grow.

I think the reason the Liberals want to force half a billion dollars in new costs on Ontario consumers is to grow the size and power of the government's unaccountable recycling agency, Waste Diversion Ontario. This Bill 91 gives this agency the power to impose new taxes on Ontario's manufacturing sector and dictate how much each business will have to pay for its recycling. This is wrong. Real job creation is not the result of new costs and bureaucracy; it's the result of setting the right conditions for economic growth.

We put forward a bold plan last November to create jobs in the recycling industry without sacrificing Ontario's manufacturing sector. We would start by scrapping the Liberal eco tax programs, eliminating the government's useless recycling bureaucracy, and we believe businesses should do their part to recover the recycling materials into new products. But rather than create a complicated bureaucracy and massive new costs for consumers, we would simply create the right conditions for economic growth. Let's lay that groundwork for those small businesses to be the ones that can create the best jobs and economy that we can and that we have the potential for doing in Ontario.

Speaker, because of the frustration and the lack of organization that this government seems to be able to have as far as creating jobs and not giving us a plan, in the spirit of that, I move to adjourn debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Jackson has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1722 to 1752.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I have members take their seats, please.

Mr. Jackson has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 0; the nays are 23.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Questions and comments.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, member for Wellington-Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Speaker, as we all know, this group of pages who have served so well for the last three weeks have now completed their tenure here at Queen's Park. I want to express my appreciation on behalf of the people of Wellington-Halton Hills—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd advise the member it's not a point of order.

Questions and comments.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, on this particular bill we've had 14 hours of debate to date, and I think that 52 members have spoken on the bill. I've enjoyed listening to some of the debate that has taken place. It's an important part of the process. I think a very significant part of the process, in this case, is going to be the movement towards the committee.

I have spoken to many people who have views on this who are looking forward to public hearings, which are usually part of the committee process, and others who are looking forward to clause-by-clause analysis of the bill and also looking forward to the presentation of amendments that they believe, in their mind, could strengthen this piece of legislation.

You're always going to find some people who are in opposition to particular bills if they think that it's going to impact them in one way or another, and that's understandable. But I think it would be important now not to engage in the bell ringing which, over the years, people have engaged in.

I was just chatting with one of my colleagues on the other side and talking about how irrelevant it makes the place seem and how irrelevant the place becomes when you engage in games of bell ringing.

At least I'll say this: As much as I think we have had a fulsome debate on this particular bill, at least when people are speaking to the bill, they are engaging, I think, constructively in the legislative process.

What has happened now is, we're getting the game playing, "bell ringing," as it's called, tying up half an hour of the time of members when we could be having others who might well want to speak this afternoon on the debate.

I hope the Legislature does not deteriorate, as it has from time to time, into a circumstance where we have nothing but bell ringing and the debate is put aside.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? The member for Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you and thank the member from Barrie for giving an elaborate speech on the merits, or lack thereof, of Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act.

The member raises a number of important points that merit discussion in this Legislature. I notice that the Minister of the Environment did say that 52 members of this Legislature have had the opportunity to speak to Bill 91, and I'm waiting to hear from the 54 remaining speakers on what they might have to say about this particular piece of legislation.

It's an important piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker. I know that the Ontario Community Newspapers Association, for example, is very concerned about the effect that Bill 91 is going to have on their particular industry. We know it's a very challenging moment in the media market. Our community newspapers, whether they're in Cambridge, Hamilton Mountain or in other places around the province of Ontario, are feeling the crunch as it is. The reality of it is that we need to be very careful and judicious about the kinds of legislation that pass through this place.

I believe fundamentally, Mr. Speaker, we have an opportunity here to talk about Bill 91. Ultimately, what members of the PC caucus have been saying, time and time again—we're still waiting for the economic plan to be produced by this government. Despite the fact that they produced an economic statement that was full of holes, we still don't have an idea of how they're going to create jobs in the province of Ontario. They're going to run this province aground by adding billions upon billions of dollars to our debt that's going to crush future growth in the province of Ontario. I think Ontarians deserve to stand against that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: It's sort of confusing to people out there. I heard the member from Barrie stand up and say, "We have the right to stand up and speak in debate, and we should debate." Then he moves adjournment of the debate, and he moves for 30 minutes of bell ringing. I wish he could explain that—if he'd get up on his feet and explain the logic of that.

Sure, we all agree we should be debating this important bill. I don't see how ringing bells—is that the Tory way of debating: ringing bells? If you have something important to say, relevant about this bill, say it. Don't ring the bells for 30 minutes.

The thing that's happening here, obviously, is that the Conservative opposition don't want this to go to committee, because at committee you will bring in the public and hear from the people of Ontario about this legislation which affects people in every community—in the north, in the big cities, in the small cities.

The work of government is to take care of issues like waste management, which is a problem; we've all agreed. Let's bring the people from all our communities who have something relevant—I want to hear from these people from Kitchener, from Markham—

Interjection: Ajax.

Mr. Mike Colle:—from Ajax especially. I want to let them come here and invite them to the committee, but the Conservatives, instead of wanting to hear from people, want to hear the bells ring. So for 30 minutes we sat here listening to bells ring when we could have been hearing from constituents from York South-Weston, from Etobicoke North and from Trinity-Spadina. They're dying to come here to speak to this bill, and the member from

Barrie had the gall to say, "No, I'd rather hear the bells ring than hear the people from Trinity-Spadina come and speak to this bill." Let the people speak to this bill—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: The official opposition is needlessly extending debate on Bill 91 by continuing to put up speakers. The bill has now been debated for more than 13 hours. Fifty-one members of the Legislature have already spoken to this bill. Despite the leader of the official opposition's pledge to clear the decks, his party is tying up the legislation once again.

I'm calling on the opposition to stop stalling and help us pass this job-creating bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Barrie, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Rod Jackson: As I mentioned before, Speaker, this bill actually has quite an impact on my riding, and I'm very proud to be able to have the opportunity to stand up here and talk to you about how I think it's going to cost jobs, not just in my riding. I think all of us need to take a look and see how this is actually going to cost this economy jobs, not build jobs.

Bill 91 is really nothing more than the Liberals' desperate attempt to change the channel on their failure to increase waste diversion. We haven't seen any real attempt to have waste diversion here. In 2008, the Liberals promised to achieve a 60% waste diversion rate. Five years later, that rate is still stalled at 23%—a pretty dismal failure, I'd say. This bill does nothing to accomplish that goal. The reason is, the Liberals have ignored Ontario's largest source of waste. As a result, they've actually allowed recycling to drop at factories, shopping malls and government buildings. The industrial, commercial and institutional sector accounts for 60% of Ontario's waste—60%. Yet the Liberals allowed recycling to decrease in this sector from 19% to 12%.

You've got to put your money where your mouth is, here. Instead of showing leadership on waste diversion, the Liberals have spent all their time running massive eco tax schemes for tires, electronics and household hazardous materials, which together only make up 3% of the province's waste. You know what? You've got to do more than window dressing here. You actually need to try to achieve something. This bill does nothing to achieve waste diversion; it does nothing to fix the environment—another example of many, of a shell game and great window dressing: something that sounds good but achieves absolutely nothing.

It's time to get it done. It's time to actually stand up and do the job rather than just talk about it.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands adjourned until Monday, November 18, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1803.

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

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Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
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Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
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Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
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sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience
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Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Continued from back cover

Legal aid

Mr. Bas Balkissoon.....	4316
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	4316

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	4316
------------------------------------	------

Legislative pages

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	4316
------------------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	4316
Hon. John Milloy	4317
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4317
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	4317
Mr. Joe Dickson	4317
Ms. Soo Wong.....	4317

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Health care

Mr. Jim Wilson	4317
----------------------	------

Affordable housing

Ms. Sarah Campbell.....	4317
-------------------------	------

Veterans

Mr. Steven Del Duca.....	4317
--------------------------	------

British Home Child Day

Mr. Jim McDonell.....	4318
-----------------------	------

Hydro infrastructure

Mr. Gilles Bisson	4318
-------------------------	------

Angus Mackay Wilson

Mr. Phil McNeely	4318
------------------------	------

Farm Family of the Year

Ms. Sylvia Jones	4319
------------------------	------

Royal Canadian Legion

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	4319
------------------------------	------

Highway improvement

Mr. Ted Arnott.....	4319
---------------------	------

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on General Government

Mr. Grant Crack.....	4319
Report adopted.....	4320

Visitors

Hon. Charles Sousa	4320
--------------------------	------

Correction of record

Mr. Jim McDonell.....	4320
-----------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Labour Relations Amendment Act (Employee Rights), 2013, Bill 129, Mr. Natyshak / Loi de 2013 modifiant la Loi sur les relations de travail (droits des employés), projet de loi 129, M. Natyshak

First reading agreed to.....	4320
Mr. Taras Natyshak	4320

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Economic outlook and fiscal review / Perspectives économiques et revue financière

Hon. Charles Sousa	4320
Mr. Tim Hudak.....	4323
Mr. Michael Prue	4323

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Cancer treatment

Mr. Ted Chudleigh.....	4324
------------------------	------

Government services

Mr. Michael Mantha.....	4324
-------------------------	------

Public transit

Ms. Mitzie Hunter	4325
-------------------------	------

Air quality

Mr. Michael Harris.....	4325
-------------------------	------

Taxation

Ms. Sarah Campbell	4325
--------------------------	------

Distracted driving

Mr. Phil McNeely.....	4325
-----------------------	------

Ontario College of Trades

Mr. Norm Miller.....	4326
----------------------	------

Minimum wage

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	4326
-----------------------	------

Waste reduction

Mr. Joe Dickson	4326
-----------------------	------

Cancer treatment

Mr. Jim Wilson.....	4326
---------------------	------

Ontario Ranger Program

Mr. John Vanthof	4326
------------------------	------

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

Mr. Frank Klees	4327
-----------------------	------

Air-rail link

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	4327
-----------------------	------

Air quality	
Mrs. Julia Munro.....	4327
Visitors	
The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon).....	4327
Remembrance Day	
Hon. David Zimmer	4328
Mr. John Yakabuski	4328
Mr. Gilles Bisson	4329

MOTIONS

Private members' public business	
Hon. John Milloy	4330
Motion agreed to	4330
Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth	
Hon. John Milloy	4330
Motion agreed to	4330
Standing Committee on Social Policy	
Hon. John Milloy	4331
Motion agreed to	4331

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS / AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS

Off-road vehicles / Véhicules tout terrain	
Mr. Grant Crack	4331
Mr. Norm Miller	4333
Mr. Michael Mantha	4334
Ms. Soo Wong	4335
Mr. John Yakabuski	4335
Mr. John Vanthof.....	4336
Mr. John Fraser	4337
Mr. Michael Harris.....	4337
Mr. Steven Del Duca.....	4338
Mr. Grant Crack	4339
Ontario Forestry Industry Revitalization Act (Height of Wood Frame Buildings), 2013, Bill 13, Mr. Fedeli / Loi de 2013 sur la revitalisation de l'industrie forestière de l'Ontario (hauteur des bâtiments à ossature de bois), projet de loi 13, M. Fedeli	
Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	4339
Ms. Sarah Campbell	4341

Hon. Linda Jeffrey.....	4342
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	4342
Mr. John Vanthof	4343
Mr. Phil McNeely.....	4343
Mr. Norm Miller.....	4344
Mr. Michael Mantha.....	4344
Mr. John Fraser	4345
Mr. Rod Jackson.....	4346
Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	4346

Medical records

Mr. Bob Delaney	4347
Mr. Jeff Yurek	4348
Ms. Cindy Forster.....	4349
Ms. Helena Jacek.....	4350
Mr. Frank Klees	4350
Miss Monique Taylor.....	4351
Mr. Shafiq Qadri.....	4352
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	4353
Hon. Michael Coteau.....	4353
Mr. Bob Delaney	4353

Off-road vehicles

Motion agreed to	4354
------------------------	------

Ontario Forestry Industry Revitalization Act (Height of Wood Frame Buildings), 2013, Bill 13, Mr. Fedeli / Loi de 2013 sur la revitalisation de l'industrie forestière de l'Ontario (hauteur des bâtiments à ossature de bois), projet de loi 13, M. Fedeli	
Second reading agreed to	4354

Medical records

Motion agreed to	4354
------------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Waste Reduction Act, 2013, Bill 91, Mr. Bradley / Loi de 2013 sur la réduction des déchets, projet de loi 91, M. Bradley	
Mr. Rod Jackson.....	4354
Hon. James J. Bradley	4356
Mr. Rob Leone	4356
Mr. Mike Colle.....	4357
Mrs. Amrit Mangat.....	4357
Mr. Rod Jackson.....	4357
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	4357

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 7 November 2013 / Jeudi 7 novembre 2013

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2013, Bill 122, Mrs. Sandals / Loi de 2013 sur la négociation collective dans les conseils scolaires, projet de loi 122, Mme Sandals	
Ms. Peggy Sattler	4295
Mr. Mike Colle	4298
Mr. Rob Leone	4298
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	4298
Ms. Dipika Damerla	4299
Ms. Peggy Sattler	4299
Royal assent / Sanction royale	
The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day)	4299
School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2013, Bill 122, Mrs. Sandals / Loi de 2013 sur la négociation collective dans les conseils scolaires, projet de loi 122, Mme Sandals	
Mr. Bob Delaney	4300
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	4300
Mr. Rob Leone	4302
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	4303
Hon. Liz Sandals	4303
Mr. Rod Jackson	4303
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	4304
Mr. Rod Jackson	4304
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	4305

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Miss Monique Taylor	4306
Mr. Bob Delaney	4306
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	4306
Mr. Percy Hatfield	4306
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	4306
Mr. Jack MacLaren	4306
Hon. Reza Moridi	4306
Hon. Liz Sandals	4306
Hon. Teresa Piruzza	4306
Hon. Ted McMeekin	4306
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	4306

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Ontario economy	
Mr. Victor Fedeli	4306
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4306

Government accountability

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	4307
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4307
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	4307

Government's record

Mr. Michael Prue	4308
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4308

Manufacturing jobs

Ms. Catherine Fife	4309
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4309

Government accountability

Mr. John Yakabuski	4309
Hon. John Milloy	4310

Cancer treatment

Mr. Taras Natyshak	4310
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4310

Education

Mr. John Fraser	4311
Hon. Liz Sandals	4311

Pan Am Games

Mr. Jeff Yurek	4311
Hon. Michael Chan	4311
Mr. Rod Jackson	4311

Nuclear waste

Mr. Jonah Schein	4312
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	4312

Elder abuse

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri	4312
Hon. Mario Sergio	4312

Cancer treatment

Mr. Ted Chudleigh	4313
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4313

Cataract surgery

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	4313
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4314

Children's services

Mr. Phil McNeely	4314
Hon. Teresa Piruzza	4314

Energy rates

Mr. Rick Nicholls	4315
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	4315

Aboriginal affairs

Ms. Sarah Campbell	4315
Hon. David Orazietti	4315

Continued on inside back cover

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 18 November 2013

Lundi 18 novembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 18 November 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 18 novembre 2013

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today members of CUPE Ontario: President Fred Hahn, who I met with this morning, and also Janice Folk-Dawson and all their other members.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Good morning, Speaker. It's good to see you after a week in our constituencies.

I would also like to welcome members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, led by their president, Fred Hahn. A delegation of over 30 people are here to meet with all members of the Legislative Assembly. I welcome you here on behalf of the Ontario New Democratic caucus.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Would you please help me welcome two guests from Kingston who have joined me today: Marion Evans and Honey-Lee Pratt, who are in the gallery.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Good morning. I want to also welcome the Canadian Union of Public Employees of Ontario visiting Queen's Park today for CUPE day, and their president, Fred Hahn. Welcome to Queen's Park, Fred. I remind all the members that there is a reception tonight at the legislative dining room at 5 p.m.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to welcome the deputy reeve of the municipality of Centre Hastings to the west members' gallery this morning. Along with Mr. Tom Simpson, we have a number of students as well: Abby Bonter, Jacob Palmateer, Ian MacPherson and Brett Prevost. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I'd like to introduce representatives from the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario—Brenda Mundy, RPNAO president; Dianne Martin, RPNAO executive director; Desiree-Ann Prillo, direct practice RPN; Donna West, direct practice RPN; Wesley Green, direct practice RPN—and other members of the RPNAO board of directors. I'm pleased to sponsor their lobby day reception today after question period in rooms 228 and 230. I invite all members to attend.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would like to do an introduction for someone who's not actually here today, but on Saturday, November 16, at 4:41 p.m., our latest granddaughter, Adelaide Helena Colucci, was born. We're very happy with that and pleased to announce it in the Legislature.

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, I seek unanimous consent, for maybe 10 minutes, to wear my Tiger-Cats hat.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek is seeking unanimous consent to wear his Hamilton Tiger-Cats hat for a short period of time. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It gives me great pleasure to introduce a delegation from Miranda do Douro, a city in northern Portugal, most of whom are visiting Ontario for the first time. The delegation is led by the mayor of Miranda do Douro, Dr. Artur Manuel Rodrigues Nunes.

Remarks in Portuguese.

Mr. Jim Wilson: It gives me great pleasure to welcome to the Legislature page Payton Smith, the daughter of Todd Smith, the member from Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I would like to welcome today two grade 10 classes from Francis Libermann Catholic secondary school in my riding. They're here with their teachers, Ms. Szala and Ms. D'Souza. I want to welcome them to Queen's Park, and I think they're just trickling in right now in the east gallery.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It also gives me great pleasure to introduce two of my constituents from Mississauga South: Reverend Jennifer Reid, from St. Peter's Anglican Church, and her son Matthew Patterson, a senior at Cawthra Park Secondary School.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to welcome Herb Wendling and his wife, Betty, from my riding of Kitchener-Waterloo. They are here to watch their granddaughter, Mattaya, start her tenure as page.

HAMILTON TIGER-CATS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of the third party on a point of order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thanks, Speaker. I just think it's appropriate to congratulate the Hamilton Tiger-Cats on their victory in the eastern conference. I hope that they do very well next Sunday when they fight the Saskatchewan Roughriders for the Grey Cup.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Todd Smith: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Speaker. This has nothing to do with the Hamilton Tiger-Cats.

Earlier, I introduced Ian MacPherson as a student at Centre Hastings Secondary School, but Ian is actually a teacher at Centre Hastings Secondary School, although he feels very young at heart.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On that point of order, it is a point of order. Members can always correct their record, but I don't think he wants to.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Having said that, I also want to wish a member in this House a happy birthday, and we won't disclose. Mr. Peter Shurman is celebrating a birthday today. Happy birthday.

DEATH OF MEMBER'S SON

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Etobicoke North on a point of order.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Thank you, Speaker. I'd respectfully ask this House, this chamber to observe a moment of silence for the passing of the son of Reza and Pari Moridi. Mahyar Moridi passed into the next world peacefully in his sleep on Sunday, November 10, and will be missed by all who knew and loved him.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Etobicoke North is seeking unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence in honour. Do we agree? Agreed.

Please all rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members and guests for their kind gesture. Thank you.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. We've lost 300,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs under the McGuinty-Wynne governments. This past week, not only Leamington in southwestern Ontario but the entire province was devastated by the news that almost 800 direct jobs will be leaving as Heinz shuts down that plant. In short, Heinz ketchup will no longer be made in the province of Ontario, tossing 800 families out of a livelihood.

Premier, I need to ask you, in light of the job losses in manufacturing and the latest in Leamington with Heinz, do you still believe that the erosion of the manufacturing sector in Ontario is a myth?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My thoughts, first of all, are with the workers and the families of the people at the Heinz plant. It's obviously of great concern, and it's very disappointing that this decision has been made.

But I want the Leader of the Opposition and the people of Ontario to know that we—and connected with Heinz—did everything we could to make sure we understood what the basis of the decision was and to try to intervene.

1040

On September 12, I called Mr. Brian Arbique, who is the managing director for Heinz Canada, to discuss the potential implications of possible job cuts. We weren't sure exactly what was happening. That discussion focused particularly on the federal initiative to remove Canadian food packaging standards, and I wanted to know from Mr. Arbique whether that was a factor in the decision.

We followed up on October 31, November 5, November 8 and November 11. So we worked very hard to make sure we understood why and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's a disturbing answer from the Premier who just doesn't seem to grasp the enormity of the impact of lost manufacturing jobs in Leamington, Niagara, Hamilton and eastern Ontario. You don't seem to understand that it's been a decade of policies that have increased hydro rates now to among the most expensive in North America, that have layered on more and more red tape and bureaucracy that's slowing business decisions down. It's been an increase in taxes.

Premier, since you have assumed the office of Premier of the province of Ontario, we've lost 38,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs in the province alone. Isn't this a wake-up call for you? Doesn't this tell you that you've done something wrong when it comes to managing our economy? Isn't it time to go down a very different path? How many more manufacturing jobs like Heinz are we going to lose before you get a wake-up call and try part of our plan?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What we know is that since the economic downturn, we have drawn in and there have been over 400,000 jobs created. We have more than replaced the jobs that were lost as a result of the economic downturn.

I have never said that there aren't changes in the manufacturing sector. There absolutely are changes in the manufacturing sector. We are moving to an era of advanced manufacturing. Some of the issues that we're addressing with our youth jobs strategy have to do with making sure that young people have the skills that they need in order to be able to take part in the new manufacturing sector.

But the purpose of my answer was to make sure that people understand that in this particular instance, and in all of these specific instances, we are doing what we can to make sure that we keep those jobs. I had a long conversation with the mayor of Leamington on Saturday morning. We are on the ground working with the workers, and my hope is that we'll be able to find some—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think the Premier's answers are insightful in the way she thinks about these issues and how we would take a very different path. She seems to think that these things just happen, that they're the result of some circumstances beyond her control. You used the term "the decision was made."

Premier, we have brought forward in this House hundreds and hundreds of times the evidence that out-of-control hydro rates are closing down the manufacturing sector—outdated labour laws, high taxes, more and more red tape from the provincial government. I worry that your ideology blinds you to the need to take a different path when it comes to our economy, to opening up our province for investment.

My team and I, we have a turnaround plan for the province of Ontario, one that will say jobs will come first in our province again, one that says that Ontario can lead. I have a vision of an Ontario that makes things for sale across the world, that actually rebuilds and strengthens our middle class with more advanced manufacturing jobs. Don't you seem to understand that it's the result of a decade of Liberal decisions that have caused us to become competitive at the bottom of the list? Our plan is to put us at the top of the list. Why don't you take some of our ideas and bring good jobs back to the province of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: [*Inaudible*] because the ideology that blinds is the ideology that would take us to the bottom of the pack, would fire people across the province and would drive us down, would not invest in the skills and in the people that we know are going to take this province forward.

I spent time in Waterloo on the weekend, and what we know is that investment in our skills and investment in our innovation is what is going to make us strong. I am absolutely not happy that there are manufacturing jobs that have been lost. But what I know is that there are more jobs coming to the province. There is an outflow of jobs and there is an inflow of jobs. But firing people and racing to the bottom is not going to get us where we want to go.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Mr. Todd Smith: We're getting pretty close to the bottom now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings will come to order.

New question.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: The problem you don't understand, Premier, is that for the 800 men and women who lost their jobs at Heinz, they have hit bottom; they've hit rock bottom. We've seen the same thing with Bick's Pickles in Dunnville and Redpath Sugar in Niagara Falls. We've seen the same thing with Can Grow. The food processing sector is emptying out because of high hydro rates, runaway red tape and outdated laws in our province. It was devastating news, and it should have been a clarion call to you when US Steel-Stelco said they'll no longer make steel in the city of Hamilton.

You say your solution is actually to do more of the same: effectively, to spend our way out of a deficit and tax our way to prosperity. Those are ideas that the NDP drove us into the ditch with, and you're going to drive us into a deeper ditch.

What are you prepared to change? Are you going to get hydro rates down? Are you going to clear out the College of Trades so we can actually attract more people into the trades and put them into jobs? What options are you going to take from our plan that will actually bring jobs back to our province and restore hope for those who are losing hope? Your plan is taking us to rock bottom as it is.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the Leader of the Opposition speak with the Ontario food processors and go to Conestoga College and look at the technology that is being used to train young people. I am absolutely convinced that we have a bright future in food processing in Ontario. It's true that the technology in some of the plants has to be changed. It's true that there have to be investments in order for advanced manufacturing to take off, and it's true that we need to make sure that young people in the province understand what the possibilities are and understand how the businesses in this province can include food processing. So I am absolutely committed to working with the food processing industry.

I am very disappointed about the Heinz situation, Mr. Speaker, but that does not mean that we're going to throw up our hands and say that the people who worked in that factory will never have a job again, because I don't believe that. I believe that there are many possibilities, and we're going to work with the community to make sure that we realize those possibilities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: As I've said many times, Speaker, I don't doubt the Premier's sincerity. I do believe you are committed. The problem is that you have no clue on how to turn our economy around. You don't seem to grasp that high energy rates are devastating the manufacturing sector in our province. You don't seem to understand

how the more and more laws that you move through the assembly are putting a bigger red tape burden on our province.

I've got a plan to get energy rates under control by stopping your runaway spending with the feed-in tariff program that's driving up our rates and is dividing communities. I have a plan to shut down the College of Trades because that's a new barrier to new job creation in our province. I have a plan to lower taxes, and one to get spending under control. In short, we have a plan to turn Ontario around—a turnaround plan for the province.

Speaker, with all due respect to the Premier, we don't need 10 months of a group hug. We need a turnaround plan that will put people back into jobs and entrepreneurs back into our province. Where's the plan?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I can't believe what I'm hearing from the leader of the official opposition, talking about supporting manufacturing when one of the most important funds that we set up to help manufacturers in southwestern Ontario—the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, which, together with the Eastern Ontario Development Fund, have created or retained more than 22,000 jobs—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The members on this side are not helping either.

Carry on.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: One of the most important funds for our manufacturers and to expand it—it was passed by this government a year ago, and you, the Leader of the Opposition, and your party voted against that fund.

Mr. Speaker, we're not going to take lessons from that party when it comes to supporting our manufacturers. There are nearly 800,000 people working in that sector in the province, and we support all of them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade says he can't believe what he's hearing from the opposition benches. I know the truth hurts, but more importantly, it hurts an awful lot to the 800 families who are now out of work—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Transportation, come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Redpath, a short while ago, closed down their doors. It should be an alarm bell to all of us that US Steel-Stelco will no longer make steel in the province of Ontario. What has to grab you folks by the lapels and shake you to the reality that your plan isn't working?

I'm disturbed to hear the Premier—actually, I've asked her a few times, “What's going to be different?” She is not answering, and refers the question.

1050

Let me ask you this: In your economic statement you put out last week, your only plan was to spend our way to prosperity. You think that borrowing more money from overseas lenders and racking up debt is somehow going to turn things around.

So I'll ask the Premier back: From her economics philosophy here, can she please give us a jurisdiction where they actually spent their way out of deficit and taxed their way to prosperity?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It's understandable that the leader of the official opposition would try to turn the question away from their lack of support for manufacturers and their lack of support for the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund.

We're very disappointed—I'm very disappointed—with the decision by Heinz last week to close that factory. I talked with the local mayor, as the Premier did, and I also talked with the local MPP. Officials from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities have also reached out and spoken with the union that represents the workers at that important factory.

I've instructed my officials to go to Leamington this week to meet with local leadership to look at all possible options—the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund and the possibility of repurposing the plant and keeping those employees working. I've also said that we have an important communities in transition fund that we're making available to the community to help them through this difficult time.

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Ontario is still above the national average when it comes to unemployment, and more than half a million Ontarians are wondering how they'll make ends meet. In the fall economic statement, the government announced plans to study some targeted tax measures to reward companies when they put people to work or invest in Ontario. Can the Premier tell Ontarians when, if ever, these plans will see the light of day?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We've been clear that that's work that the Ministry of Finance is doing right now. We said we were going to do that when we announced our budget just this past year, and we reaffirmed that in the fall economic statement, which, as you know, is an update. That work is ongoing, and we will be moving to make those changes within the next few months.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People have watched as their bills go up and their paycheques go down. It's time to get the cost of living under control in this province, but the only thing the Premier announced to make life more affordable is that the cost for Drive Clean would come

down. Will the Premier tell Ontarians how much Drive Clean fees will be coming down and when, if ever, they can see a bit of relief?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, these are issues that we are working on, and we will be making those announcements in due course. In the meantime, I would hope that both the leader of the third party and the Leader of the Opposition would work with us to get the small businesses act passed by the end of December, because that is a piece of legislation that will actually help small business and allow small businesses to create more jobs. We need to get that through the Legislature, through the committee and back into the House. I hope that the leader of the third party will work with us on that bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The fall economic statement says that people will have to wait for relief on Drive Clean costs, but it sounds like education property taxes will be going up. The Premier won't tell Ontarians when they can see some relief on Drive Clean costs. Can she tell them if the cost of their education property taxes will be going up and when that might happen?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I hope that the leader of the third party will support a targeted tax measure, which is in the small businesses act, that will help small businesses reduce their payroll taxes and give them some relief. I hope that the leader of the third party will do that.

What we said in our fall economic statement was that we were going to be looking at other measures, because the reality is that we are going to stay on target to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18, and we have to look at ways of making sure that all the supports we have in place are rational and make sense, and where we need to change them, we need to change them. The leader of the third party has identified one issue that was raised by Mr. Drummond. It's something we need to look at in the context of a number of other measures.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Perhaps the Premier should tell her members to stop filibustering the general government committee and we'll actually get somewhere on that legislation.

My next question is to the Premier. A lot of families are wondering how they're going to be able to afford to retire. While the government is committed to forging ahead with PRPPs that will create a healthy windfall for big Bay Street firms, people are hoping for an affordable public retirement plan and they're getting nothing more than promises and endless conversations. The Premier has made a commitment to help Bay Street firms. When will she make a commitment to help everyday families?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think that the leader of the third party may be referring to the discussion about the Canadian pension plan enhancement that is being discussed across the country.

The leader of the third party will know that it was our government that has been talking about this for a number of years, Mr. Speaker. The former finance minister raised this issue, talked about it across the country and raised it with the federal finance minister. The federal finance minister seems to have backed off, but we are pushing this issue. I raised it with my colleagues at the meeting of Canada's Premiers just last week, and my hope is that we will be able to come to some consensus.

The Minister of Finance has been able to come to some consensus with his colleagues about some principles upon which we think that the CPP should be enhanced. My hope is we'll be able to take it to the next step with the agreement of the federal finance minister.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I think Ontario families are getting pretty concerned. They want to see action that will create new jobs; the government promises study. They want to see action that will make life more affordable; the government muses about a property tax increase and can't even commit to cutting fees at Drive Clean. They want to see change, and instead, they're getting panels, promises and a lot more of the same. Why should people believe the Premier when all she offers is endless conversation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's just talk about what's happening: the youth jobs strategy—already over 3,000 young people have been placed in jobs as a result of the youth jobs strategy, and that's the youth jobs strategy that we put in place and that we are implementing; full-day kindergarten; the 30% off tuition grant; the investment of \$35 billion over the next three years—so the leader of the third party can fabricate a narrative about—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm going to withdraw that before you even stand up. I'm just going to change—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's do it officially. Withdraw, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Withdraw.

The leader of the third party can create a narrative about what is or is not happening. What I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, is we've got programs in place that are helping people to get the skills training that they need. We've got programs in place that are building and investing in infrastructure across this province, and we know that that's what communities need in order to be able to thrive.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The families who make Ontario work are worried about jobs for them and their kids. They're worried about the future and whether they're going to be able to retire. They're worried about the fact that life keeps getting more and more and more expensive. They keep getting empty promises, study after study and lots of conversation.

The only people getting results, Speaker, are the well-connected interests promoting private-public partnerships

and pooled registered pension plans. Why does the Premier think that well-connected friends should come ahead of everyday families in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, what I think is that the 90% of small businesses that would benefit from having their payroll taxes reduced, if we could get the small businesses act passed—I think that they would benefit and those families would benefit. I think the families of those young people—those more than 3,000 young people who have now got placements, who are going to get experience and training—I think they are benefiting from the initiative that we've put in place, Mr. Speaker.

So I am sympathetic to what the leader of the third party is talking about in terms of people wondering about the future of the province. But what I know is that if we invest in the people and their skills, and we make sure that they get the support that they need, if we invest in infrastructure and if we create an environment where business can thrive, then we will have that future that Ontario needs. We have to do that in a coherent way, not jumping on every populist bandwagon that comes along. We need a plan; we're the party that has got that plan, Mr. Speaker.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier.

Good morning, Premier. The economic assumptions which you've based the province's finances on have gotten significantly worse. Despite a weaker economy and the Bank of Canada stating you won't hit your growth targets, you insist that revenue will be nearly identical to your budget projections.

This leaves us to conclude the government is hiding from the truth, because these figures clearly demonstrate the province is not on track to balance the budget by 2017. It's obvious this government does not understand the size and scope of the problem they've created.

Premier, will you tell us the truth? What is the real effect of the slowing economy on the government's revenue, spending and debt projections for the next three years?

1100

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear in our fall economic update about the concerns that we all share around the world. In fact, our measures and our calculations are even more cautious than those of independent economists who made their projections; ours were even more cautious than that. So we're taking a cautious measure and we're taking measures and discipline to control our spending. In fact, we cut our spending even last quarter as a result of declining revenues felt around the world. We are the only government in over a decade anywhere in Canada that actually cut spending year over year. We're the only government that

introduced financial transparency to ensure the integrity of those numbers, and they were audited, Mr. Speaker.

So the member opposite can stand and say what he wishes. We are going to continue to invest in the people of Ontario. We're going to continue to invest in the businesses, and we look to you to support small businesses by passing the act so that we can get on with the business of helping them as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, you announced that you'll embark on a massive second round of stimulus spending, which apparently will have no effect on the government's deficit targets, and very telling, you refuse to provide a three-year spending and revenue outlook traditionally included in the fall economic statement. This hides the impact of a weaker economy, which the Bank of Canada said to expect, and increased spending, which you just announced. So it's obvious to us that you don't understand the size and scope of the problem you created.

Premier, why did you deviate from the normal practice of including this information in the fall economic statement? What is it you don't want us to know?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have displayed and identified all of the particulars in our fall economic statement. The member talks about a precedent that has also been established, because in all cases, even when they were in power, they never took the steps to go beyond their navel-gazing. The member opposite, my critic, can't get past his yellow tie. He's got to recognize that we've got to think long term. We've got to ensure that we look beyond the immediate, and that means investing in those particulars that stimulate growth.

The member must know that across-the-board cuts, a slash-and-burn policy, will hurt our sensitive economic recovery. As well, we cannot be reckless in our spending. We're doing both, Mr. Speaker, and the members opposite have to understand that we have to invest in our future to ensure that we afford the debt that we have by measuring our net-debt-to-GDP ratio, which is under control as well. We'll continue to stay on track to balance by—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Speaker. Through you to the Premier: Premier, your Liberal government keeps talking about local food, but yet stands idly by as processing facilities shut their doors and devastate communities. In Leamington, the Heinz plant's announcement that it was shutting its doors after 103 years will leave 740 people unemployed. It will have severe consequences for the entire region. It will also leave 46 tomato growers without contracts to sell their products. Has the Premier at any point met with the Heinz plant to discuss ways that the plant could remain operational and save these jobs in Leamington?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said in answer to another question, we did the opposite of standing idly by. We were very involved. We talked to executives in the States and executives here in Canada. I talked with the Minister of Agriculture federally on the issue around packaging. We did everything we could. We will work with people in the community, Mr. Speaker, to the best of our ability to make sure that those people find their way back into the economy and find their way back into jobs, and to work to make sure that if there is a possibility that that plant can be transformed, or whatever the options are, that we explore those because it is absolutely critical.

On the other hand, we have to make sure that we continue to draw business to the province. That is the future. That is what we need to make sure happens in the coming days.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Back to the Premier: For the record, the NDP warned the government and urged them to stop the Heinz shutdown in March and again in the summer. We urged the Premier to come up with a plan to save jobs in food processing in Leamington. This government's solution to job creation is to write a letter to the federal government and let them figure it out.

Seven hundred jobs and almost 350 seasonal workers will be left out in the cold in southwestern Ontario. The food packaging regulation change issue was raised long ago. Has this Premier done anything else besides mention this issue to the federal government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said, I had conversations with executives at Heinz a number of times over the past months. Starting in September, I spoke with the managing director for Heinz Canada. Mr. Speaker, we absolutely did that work.

The fact is that the third party thinks that they can control the private sector. That's not how it works. In fact, we are facilitators of those initiatives. Let me talk about some of the major international investments in food processing in Ontario:

—Natra, a confectionary food processor based in Spain, is establishing a manufacturing facility in London;

—the Ferrero confectionary plant in Brantford: \$385 million over the last five years;

—a pet food plant in Puslinch, Royal Canin: \$73 million; and

—a baking ingredients plant in Mississauga, Puratos from Belgium: \$40 million.

It pains me that Heinz is closing. We did everything we could to intercept that. We will work with the people in the community, and there are jobs coming to this province.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Finance.

Our government has an economic plan for investing in people, building modern infrastructure, and supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate that drives

economic growth and creates jobs for Ontarians. As the hard-working people in my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and across Ontario know well, small businesses must be central to this plan if we're to ensure a strong and prosperous economy. That's why our government has put forward the Supporting Small Businesses Act, to cut taxes and remove burdensome red tape from Ontario's small business.

Could the minister please update this House on the progress of the legislation and our plan to cut payroll taxes for Ontario's small businesses?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you to the member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for the question, recognizing that small businesses are central to our government's economic plan. It's why we introduced Bill 105, which will cut taxes for 60,000 small businesses and eliminate tax altogether for 90% of small businesses in this province. This legislation is exactly what we need to help drive the economy forward, help small business and create new jobs.

Since it was introduced, my colleagues across the aisle have stood in their place and demanded that this government bring forward job legislation and an economic plan. We did, and it includes this bill. But members of the opposition continue to stall these tax cuts for small business. They voted down a motion to advance this legislation in committee, and they continue to hold it up despite calls from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business for it to be returned for third reading.

Mr. Speaker, it's time for the opposition to quit talking and start acting. We need to vote on this bill before the House rises. We need this legislation passed now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for the update. It's disappointing to hear that we're unable to find some common ground on doing the right thing for the economy and also the right thing for our small businesses here in Ontario.

Could the minister please inform the House as to the consequences of continued stall tactics on the part of the opposition?

Hon. Charles Sousa: There are roughly 400,000 small and mid-sized businesses in Ontario. By eliminating a payroll tax on 90% of these small businesses, we can continue to ensure that our business climate is competitive and strong, and maintain Ontario's competitiveness as one of the best places in the province, in the country and in North America to do business.

If we don't see this legislation passed before the holiday break, we won't be able to put these tax cuts in place for Ontario's small businesses. If we don't act now, Ontario's small businesses will pay higher taxes on February 15, 2014, and then again on March 15, 2014, and then again the next month, and so on.

It begs the question: Why, then, would the opposition continue to stall this essential legislation? Because they're more interested in scoring cheap political points than they are in supporting our small businesses.

Mr. Speaker, I hope they can see past their short-term thinking and send Bill 105 back to the House for third reading so that we can all support small businesses in Ontario.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the Minister of Finance.

The only thing open and transparent about this government is their obvious cheap political gaming. So far, this government has done nothing but put Bill 105 to the general government committee, whose legislative agenda they know is full, as opposed to one that is free.

1110

There can only be one explanation for this: This government is scared and trying to skirt responsibility for the Pan Am Games. Can the minister stand and tell us why they're playing games and using bills to block Pan Am accountability investigations?

Hon. Charles Sousa: To the House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, let's correct the record. On November 4 of this year, several weeks ago, a motion was put forward by the government to look at Bill 105. It was defeated by the combined forces of the opposition parties, who then came forward with a Pan Am bill.

We are in the process of talking about how we can do both. We can deal with Bill 105, which is an important matter, and at the same time deal with the Pan Am Games. Yet despite all they're saying here, they have shown no interest in dealing with Bill 105.

Our government's position is very clear. If they want to look at the Pan Am Games situation, we are very happy to co-operate. But at the same time, we are asking that time be allotted to Bill 105.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Speaker, there are clearly other committees that are open and can handle this bill. This government is acting like it's afraid of the truth for a change. We need to know what's so bad about Pan Am planning that they're willing to sacrifice the very worthy Bill 105 instead of allowing an investigation into the Pan Am Games to go forward.

It has to be bad, Speaker. We've already discovered four extra budgets at a total of \$1.1 billion, and there's no word yet on the cost of security or transportation.

Sacrificing Bill 105 won't save you, Minister. Your government may not be able to handle the truth, but the people of Ontario deserve to know. Will the minister come clean, stop worrying about other members' ward-robos and actually tell us what the cost of the Pan Am Games is going to be?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the member is, quite frankly, wrong. On November 4, when we moved a motion to have the committee look into Bill 105—there was

no other business before the committee—the opposition voted against it and then came forward with the Pan Am suggestion.

The government members are pleased to go ahead with an examination of the Pan Am Games and also auto insurance. All we are asking is that an allotted period of time be given to Bill 105. This afternoon at the committee, the government members will bring forward a motion that will allow all three to go forward. Mr. Speaker, I am looking forward to members of the opposition putting their money where their mouth is and supporting that motion so that we can look at auto insurance and the Pan Am Games, and make sure Bill 105 is looked at by the committee and hopefully reported back to this Legislature.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question this morning is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Good morning, Minister. After weeks of outrage and outcry from Windsor-Essex residents and persistent pressure from NDP MPPs, especially my colleague from Essex, this government has finally reversed its wrong-headed decision to cut thoracic surgeries in our community.

Some of us remember well a former Conservative education minister who was caught on video saying, "Let's manufacture a crisis, create a crisis, and then we'll look good when we resolve it." Does the minister think it's right that her MPP from Windsor West is taking credit for evading a crisis that was manufactured by her own party?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Good morning, Speaker, and good morning to the member opposite.

This is good news for Windsor. I think really what the member was saying is, "This is good news for Windsor. Thank you, Minister, for making this decision."

I know how important this issue has been for the people of Windsor. I can tell you that the member from Windsor West has been very, very thoughtful in her approach to this issue. She and I both have enormous respect for Cancer Care Ontario. Cancer Care Ontario is a globe-leading organization when it comes to providing the highest quality of care for cancer patients. They are doing an exceptional job.

The unique circumstances in Windsor, brought to my attention by the member from Windsor West, made me realize that this issue was one we had to deal with a little bit differently. I'm pleased that the member opposite is happy with this decision, and I accept his support for this decision.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The residents of Windsor-Essex are happy that their health care is going to be preserved. It was the right thing to do; it was the only thing to do. But the question remains about the government's lack of consultation with the local hospitals and the needless anxiety that patients have been put through.

This morning, the member from Windsor West was happily taking credit for the decision. Can the minister explain why this government took my residents down this path in the first place?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, the member opposite has a conspiracy theory going here that is a bit absurd, to say the least.

What I can tell you is that Cancer Care Ontario is making real change to the way we deliver. In fact, as a result of the excellent work Cancer Care Ontario has done, deaths after thoracic surgery have been cut in half. That is a significant improvement in quality that benefits all Ontarians.

The circumstances in Windsor were unique. The member from Windsor West worked very hard. She did her homework. She made a reasoned, articulate argument that this was a decision that did not serve the people of Windsor, and that's why we've made the decision we have.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, and it deals with the same subject. In Ottawa, we expect the best health care, as does each and every person living in Ontario, and we need to ensure that access to all kinds of health services is available in all regions of the province.

We have had residents in Windsor express concern that thoracic cancer treatment will no longer be available at the Windsor Regional Hospital and they might have to commute long distances for this specific treatment, such as to London and other centres.

My question to the minister is to further elaborate on what she has done to ensure that cancer patients in Windsor can continue to receive the services they need.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'd like to thank the member from Ottawa—Orléans, who is a relentless advocate for improving health care in his community and across the province.

Speaker, he has raised an issue of great importance to the people of Windsor. Last week, the member from Windsor West wrote to me. She outlined a clearly articulated, thoughtful argument as to why services should remain in Windsor. We have had many meetings on this issue, many conversations on this issue. I've also heard from Cancer Care Ontario the rationale behind their original decision.

It became clear to me that thoracic cancer surgery in Windsor has a very strong record; it has very high quality. I have been convinced that Windsor should be designated level 2 thoracic cancer surgery, and that is, in fact, the decision that has been conveyed to Cancer Care Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: This is great news for the people of Windsor. I can recall when we got the good news that the Montfort hospital was going to remain open, when it was closed by the Harris government in the 1990s. Cer-

tainly, we had the same issue at CHEO when the heart section was to be moved from Ottawa and we were able to keep it there. CHEO is a wonderful organization and doing well in our capital.

It's good to see that our government is making the tough decisions needed to ensure that our health care system thrives, and that all Ontarians have access to services closer to where they live. Cancer patients in Windsor, Ottawa and all across this province deserve nothing but the very best of care.

Speaker, can the minister further tell us why she is keeping the cancer treatment program going in the Windsor area?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think this is a very good example of an MPP doing their work. The member from Windsor West met with people in Windsor, understood the issue thoroughly and presented some arguments as to why this was a decision that had to be changed.

I commend the member from Windsor West and other members from all sides of this House who take the time to do their homework, who really do think sincerely and thoughtfully about issues that reflect the concerns of their residents. This is a victory for an MPP doing her work and changing a government decision.

1120

CANCER TREATMENT

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Health. It's been almost three weeks since you first met with Kimm Fletcher, and she still doesn't have an answer.

In September 2009, the Ombudsman released his report, *A Vast Injustice*, which looked at the cap for Avastin treatments for those with colorectal cancer. In his report, he stated that the government must fund Avastin for increased patient survival.

As you know, Minister, the effects of using Avastin for colorectal cancer and for glioblastoma multiforme brain cancer are the same in both scenarios. In both cases, Avastin simply prolongs the patient's life.

Minister, why is Avastin funded for colorectal cancer and not for brain cancer?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This Legislature made a determination several years ago to take the politics out of making decisions about what drugs would be covered for what conditions. I respect the will of the Legislature on that issue and I am committed to maintaining the integrity of our evidence-based decision-making process when it comes to funding cancer drugs. Quite simply, the evidence does not support Avastin for brain cancer.

The Committee to Evaluate Drugs will always review new evidence. If there is evidence that supports that this improves outcomes, then the Committee to Evaluate Drugs will do their work.

I think it's unfortunate that the member opposite does not respect the evidence clearly articulated by the Committee to Evaluate Drugs and by Health Canada. I think it's very important to note—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews:—this is not Ontario; it is Health Canada—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please.

Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I think it might be helpful to go back to 2009 and refresh the minister's memory, because on November 29, 2009, you announced that your ministry would fund Avastin for colorectal cancer, but this announcement came after the former member from Burlington brought awareness to this issue, resulting in an Ombudsman's report.

Minister, you stood in this House three weeks ago and said you would be breaking the law to fund Avastin for brain cancer because the Committee to Evaluate Drugs hadn't approved it. Yet, the committee did not approve Avastin for colorectal cancer in 2009, but, somehow, you found a way to approve it.

Minister, clearly, you have the ability to approve Avastin for brain cancer in the same way you did for colorectal cancer. Will you stand here today and promise Kimm Fletcher and the other patients with cancer across Ontario that you will fund this drug for brain cancer?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I guess my question back is: Are you suggesting we ignore the evidence? The member opposite knows, as well as every member in this House, that there are demands in our health care system that need funding, so we must rely on evidence. The evidence to date is clear that outcomes do not improve with Avastin for this particular condition.

I would like to know from the member opposite: Does she want to bring politics back in decisions around drug coverage, Speaker? Is she asking for one person to receive exceptional coverage? What is she asking for? I think it's up to the member opposite to be clear about what their policy is on this particular issue.

THUNDER BAY GENERATING STATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Liberal promises come and go in Thunder Bay just like the fall leaves. Election season must be getting close if the government's promising for the third time to convert the Thunder Bay generating station after cancelling the project twice at a cost of \$20 million. Not only does this latest promise smack of opportunism but it is a short-term fix that won't meet the future energy demands of mining projects in the region. When will this government stop playing politics with the energy needs of the northwest?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We have deliberated on this issue, notwithstanding the harassment from the leader of the third party, and we have consulted with the people of Thunder Bay. We took our time; we were thoughtful. We

looked at technical solutions and we provided the best solution that was available for Thunder Bay.

The plant is going to continue operating with advanced biomass. She may be concerned that it's limited for five years, but we will assess the demand in the area as we proceed. If we have to add another unit and extend the time period, we will.

We have had a very positive response from the stakeholders in the community. The mayor of Thunder Bay has said that he's 75% happy with this decision, and that's very good for him.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Common Voice Northwest Energy Task Force has called the government's latest plan to convert the Thunder Bay generating station to advanced biomass "half a loaf." That's because running the station at a fraction of its capacity is what's in play here, and actually running it only for a few days per year doesn't give the region a sustainable energy plan for the long term.

Instead of focusing on a short-term bid to save some Liberal seats, when will this government finally listen to local voices and get serious about the future energy needs of the northwest?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I've been informed by two excellent MPPs from Thunder Bay. They have been in touch with their community. They have been in touch with our ministry. They have been working with their community. We have been working with their community. We came up with a responsible decision for Thunder Bay. They will have energy when they need it. They'll have electricity when they need it, for now and for the future. That commitment is there. We've proven it by our actions, and we will continue to respect the needs and the electricity demands in Thunder Bay.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. The accessibility directorate is now under the purview of the minister's ministry because our government is committed to ensuring that individuals with disabilities have equal access to job opportunities and economic security.

As part of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, businesses must comply with the customer service standard. As well, businesses and not-for-profits with more than 20 staff must file a compliance report.

Can the minister please update the House about how the customer service standard is being enforced?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member from Ottawa South for this important question. All Ontario businesses and not-for-profits must be compliant with the customer service standard under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. This is the law. As the minister responsible for the AODA across government, I take this issue very, very seriously. Not enough businesses have complied with the customer service standard,

and this is unacceptable. It is their legal responsibility to comply.

My goal as the minister responsible is to enforce this law until we reach full compliance. Over the next two weeks, we will be sending warning notices to businesses that have failed thus far to file compliance reports. Failure to comply, failure to file, will result in penalties.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you, Minister, for the update. It's important that all Ontario businesses are compliant with the customer service standard. Adhering to the standards of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act is also important to our economy. One in seven people in our province has a disability, and that number is expected to increase substantially as our population ages. This represents a significant portion of our workforce.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can you please update this House about your ministry's plan to improve the percentage of organizations that have filed their service standard compliance reports?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Of course, our government is committed to building a dynamic and innovative business climate, one where every Ontarian can work in a safe and accessible environment. Ontario can proudly boast that it's one of the first places in the world to make accessibility a law. To increase the number of organizations that have filed their customer service standard compliance report, we will work with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario to promote the customer service standard and fine those organizations that, after multiple warnings—I repeat, multiple warnings—have not yet complied.

Ontario is poised to be a global leader in this sector. It's a human right that our province can't afford to ignore, and it makes great business sense as well. As the jobs minister, I will use my portfolio to engage the business community right across the province to promote—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —awareness of the customer service standard in the act. I'd like to call on all members of this Legislature to support me in doing that.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Premier. Since your government came into power in 2003, my riding has lost over 10,000 manufacturing jobs. Your words tell us that you are creating jobs, but I question where.

1130

Last week, the H.J. Heinz plant in Leamington announced that it would be closing after 104 years, resulting in the loss of over 1,000 jobs, affecting their entire supply chain, and lost contracts for 46 tomato farmers who have up to \$2 million tied up in equipment. The economic impact to Leamington is devastating.

Premier, you clearly stated this morning that you knew about this in September, but you failed to let anyone know. You didn't make a statement the day of the closure

announcement because you were too busy dealing with the city of Toronto's issues.

The people in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex need answers now—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: So my—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please. You're finished. You must talk faster.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment is going to want to speak to the supplementary, but to the question of where jobs are being created, let me name the places: London, Brantford, Puslinch, Mississauga, Brantford again, London, Wheatley. There are food processing plants, there are manufacturing plants that are expanding, that are being developed across the province.

I am very sorry and disappointed that the Heinz plant is being closed, but it is not about just this plant. The Heinz Company in general is making decisions across all of their operations. I spoke with the executives in the States, the executives in Canada, and of course I didn't talk about what those conversations were about because those were confidential interactions.

My minister was out the day the announcement was made—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, too. Minister, during our survey last year, food manufacturers told us that their biggest challenges are the result of your government. Heinz was one of the 75% that said red tape is increasing, and we heard about the high cost of doing business in Ontario, especially the spiralling cost of hydro. We told you all that last year, Minister.

You knew the Heinz plant closure was coming and the only thing you did was issue a press release about container size deregulation, trying to blame the federal government for the closure. The federal minister told you clearly they are not proceeding with the changes because it would cost jobs.

Interjection.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: No, Minister, he told you in those conversations. Since you knew the container size regulations weren't changing, why did you issue that release the day before the closing?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Durham can play musical chairs all he wants, but I can still recognize his voice. The member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex will come to order as well.

Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is not true that we knew that the federal government had made that decision on packaging before the announcement at Heinz was made. It is just not true. In my conversations with the federal

minister, there was no commitment that they would change their rule on the packaging. There was no commitment that they would not make that change. There was very much a dissembling on that issue, so it is absolutely not true that that decision had been made.

We reached out, Mr. Speaker. We reached out to the company. We have an Open for Business table where we are changing regulation, and I really think that my critic knows, the member opposite knows that we are working with the food processing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, I'm going to tell you—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And that's enough. Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We're working with the food processing sector, and as a result of the Open for Business table, regulations are being changed so that their businesses can flourish. He knows that, and I know that he would like to continue to work with us on those issues.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Minister of Education. The District School Board of Niagara has called upon the education minister and the Premier to visit the school board in hopes for some action on a decade-long, chronic underfunding problem of special education from the province.

The school board estimates that they are being underfunded to the tune of \$9 million a year—\$90 million over the last decade. Why did this government waste over a billion dollars on saving Liberal seats during the last election while ignoring the needs of special education students in the Niagara region?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think we need to understand that there's just one particular component of the special education funding model that the Niagara district school board is concerned about. In fact, the Niagara district school board gets exactly the same per pupil funding as other school boards on virtually every component.

The high-needs component is based on documentation around the incidence of high-needs kids. That's something that was introduced by the Tories, something that school boards complained wasn't necessarily a satisfactory way of getting at it. We got rid of that, and we actually do have a model in place that is gradually correcting that issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Back to the minister: Well, you've had 10 years to actually fix it.

The District School Board of Niagara receives only \$355 per student in high-needs funding. The average provincial school board receives \$636 per student. Why do special education needs students in Niagara receive just over half of the funding that special education

students receive in other regions of this province? When and will this be fixed?

Hon. Liz Sandals: As I just explained, that amount is actually based on documentation which the Niagara district school board has historically submitted to the Ministry of Education. We do have a program to look at phasing that to a different level.

However, I think what is perhaps more relevant here today is we've just begun, today, a review of the complete funding model. We are working with school board stakeholders all over the province to review the school board funding model and to look at ways where it needs to be updated, areas where it can be made more effective, to ensure that, in fact, we are providing the best possible support to school boards and to children all over the province.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Protecting the quality of the air we breathe is a fundamental concern for both the people in my riding of Scarborough—Guildwood and for Ontarians more generally. It affects their health and our health care costs.

Both the federal government and the United Nations have recently issued reports that suggest Canada is not on track in meeting its commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 17% from 2005 levels by 2020.

Air pollution has proven to have negative effects on health and can cause premature death. It is important that this nationwide trend is not the case in our province of Ontario, especially for our youngest residents.

Speaker, through you: Would the Minister of the Environment please share with this House what progress our government has made towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario?

Hon. James J. Bradley: An excellent question from the member. We strongly believe in improving air quality for the well-being of our residents. Our Green Energy Act continues to bring Ontario emission-free electricity and new, clean jobs. Ontario's dedicated commitment to phase out coal-fired electricity by the end of 2014 has successfully reduced emissions in the electricity sector by 57% now.

Finally, on November 1, 2013, the Ministry of the Environment posted a proposal on the environmental and regulatory registries to consult with stakeholders on a provincial mandate for greener diesel fuels. That would include, of course, green diesel, which is a safe, non-toxic, clean-burning, biodegradable and renewable fuel.

To ensure that tangible environmental benefits are achieved, the proposed approach includes an average greenhouse gas reduction requirement for fuel volumes sold and used in the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Minister. It is reassuring to hear that our government has taken steps toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario. The

community of Scarborough–Guildwood is lucky to have a local biofuels company, Pond Biofuels, working toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions with investments from our government.

The 2013 budget announced that Ontario will take steps to update its green transportation fuels policy by consulting with stakeholders on a provincial mandate for greener diesel fuels, including discussions related to the amount of renewable fuel content, as well as greenhouse gas requirements.

I am pleased that the Minister of the Environment is delivering on this government's commitment to consult with stakeholders on greener diesel fuels through the November 1 proposal which you mentioned.

Speaker, through you, could the Minister of the Environment please share with this House further details on the proposed greener diesel fuel regulations and how this will affect the air we breathe?

Hon. James J. Bradley: What is key about this, first of all, is that part of that commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality—the ministry proposed that regulation. It's going to require that Ontario's diesel pool contain a minimum percentage of diesel made from renewable sources. The proposal is expected to provide air quality benefits, including reduced particulate matter and greenhouse gas reductions. It is estimated that the greener diesel requirement will reduce Ontario's GHG emissions by approximately 200,000 tonnes per year in the first compliance period, one million tonnes annually from 2017 onwards, and about five million tonnes on a cumulative basis by 2020.

There are a series of initiatives being taken to improve air quality, and I think the people of this province will support those.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Premier concerning the closure of the Heinz plant in Leamington. The matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the members' west gallery, we do have a visitor who represented Burlington South in the 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, and Burlington in the 37th and 38th, Parliaments, Mr. Cam Jackson. Welcome, Cam.

Also in the Speaker's gallery, we have a visitor, a former MP of Haldimand–Norfolk, Mr. Bob Speller. Welcome, Bob.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm happy to welcome members of the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario to Queen's Park today. I had the pleasure of meeting with Linda Keirl, a long-time RPN; Searle Schonewille, the director of policy for the RPNAO; and Scott Morrison, a student delegate from the organization and a proud resident of Oxford.

Thank you for meeting with me. Enjoy your time at Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Peter Shurman: I rise today to speak to the devastation caused by the catastrophic superstorm Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. This ferocious storm has left a staggering death toll that is currently estimated to be approaching 4,000, and over 1,000 people are still unaccounted for. Sadly, this number is predicted to exceed 10,000 people.

With previously unseen levels of natural destruction, Typhoon Haiyan brought gusts of wind to the Philippines that were well over 300 kilometres per hour. This has caused unimaginable turmoil and mass devastation that is still rippling across the country right now.

On behalf of the substantial Filipino population in Thornhill and their families and fellow countrymen across Ontario, I stand today to seek a nonpartisan response for assistance. Our friends and neighbours are gravely worried about the land of their birth and about family members who are or may be victims of this devastating typhoon.

The Filipino community is often among the first to step up when assistance of any kind is required, regardless of where help is needed. They also have an abiding sense of family. I have personally witnessed this in Thornhill countless times. We cannot stand idly by while such a catastrophe unfolds. Canada and Ontario are driving forces in assisting with disaster relief wherever and whenever required. I call upon the Premier of Ontario to join with Canada and individual Canadians to assist during this time of need in the Philippines without delay.

JIMMY VELGAKIS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm standing here because of a constituent, Jimmy Velgakis. Jimmy injured his back driving a Zamboni back in the 1990s, was fired from his job and didn't get recompense from the WSIB because he wasn't allowed to bring forward necessary witnesses. Jimmy, after years of legal wrangling, went on a hunger strike in 2011 outside of the WSIB. Steve Mahoney, the then chair, made him a promise that they'd reopen his case. That never happened.

So he has started again on a hunger strike. He's sitting in front of the WSIB at 200 Front Street. It has been seven days that Jimmy, who's 72 years old and has diabetes, has gone without food of any sort. I also started on a hunger strike the same day he did, so it has been seven days since I've eaten as well, and both of us are determined to finally get justice for Jimmy. If we don't get justice for Jimmy, I'm frightened that Jimmy will actually die on Front Street in front of the WSIB.

I'm challenging the government members and the labour minister to do something, and the folk at WSIB—I have talked to them all—to do something. This is beyond absurd now. His lawyer has done everything she can. It's time to get justice for Jimmy Velgakis—72 years old, with diabetes, on his second hunger strike.

SRI GURU NANAK DEV JI

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: This past Sunday I had the opportunity to visit the Dixie gurdwara in my great riding of Mississauga—Brampton South with our Premier, the Honourable Kathleen Wynne, to celebrate the birthday of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji.

Guru Nanak is the founder of the Sikh faith. He was a messenger of peace and unity. Guru Nanak was a visionary who espoused a society without discrimination or distinction based upon caste, colour, creed or faith. He taught a way of life: hard work, simple and honest living, selfless service and sharing of one's fortune with the less fortunate.

Hundreds of years ago, he advocated gender equality and empowerment of women. He said:

Remarks in Punjabi.

"How can we condemn women who give birth to kings and queens?"

As we celebrated the birthday of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, we also celebrated the cultural diversity of this great province, Ontario.

OLIVIA WISE

Mr. Michael Harris: Today I rise to honour a special young lady named Olivia Wise, who has impacted the lives of millions of people, including myself.

Olivia was a healthy Ontario teenager who enjoyed singing and playing basketball. Tragically, two years ago, doctors found an inoperable tumour in her brain. But even in the face of adversity, Olivia summoned the strength to do what she loved: sing one of her favourite songs. She and her family visited a downtown studio and recorded her own version of Katy Perry's hit song Roar.

When I saw the video, I was taken aback to see this young lady, in weakness and illness, still working to make the most of her life and to make a difference in the lives of those around her. If you have not had the opportunity yet, I would encourage all members of this House and all of you watching at home to log on to YouTube and watch this very inspirational video.

In honour of her courage, Olivia's family started a fund called the Liv Wise Fund, which collects donations for tumour research and treatment for pediatric cancer patients. To help raise awareness about the fund, students across the province are sending wishes to Olivia. I would encourage members to join me by also sending her wishes.

My wish for Olivia is that your legacy inspires others to keep fighting.

NUTRITION FOR LEARNING

Ms. Catherine Fife: On Friday, November 1, I met with representatives from Nutrition for Learning, a charitable organization that supports community-based nutrition programs for students.

Their mission is to enhance the ability to learn by ensuring that each student attends school well nourished. Feeding children in our schools is an act of compassion and care, but we also know through research that students underperform and are disengaged in school when they are hungry.

Nutrition for Learning is one program that directly impacts the physical, cognitive, behavioural and academic needs of children and youth in Waterloo region and, indeed, across the province.

The work this organization does is critical for students in my community, but the nutritional needs of children are increasing. Today, over 13,000 students receive a meal every day through one of the 141 different programs affiliated with Nutrition for Learning in K-W. This is accomplished with the generous support of over 1,800 volunteers and many donors.

These programs are only available in 60% of the schools in Waterloo region. It is obvious that more needs to be done to support this essential program.

Lois Peterson, a principal in the Waterloo Catholic District School Board, is one of the co-presidents of Nutrition for Learning, and has been an advocate for bridging the gap that prevents all students from realizing their full potential. When I met with Lois, she was clear about the need for a pan-Canadian student nutrition program for all children.

Educators experience first-hand the needs of kids whose families have been hit hard by this economic downturn. We should listen to their advice. Nutrition for Learning needs the appropriate resources to ensure that every child in the province of Ontario is fed.

DON BURKE

Mr. John Fraser: I am pleased to stand today to acknowledge the outstanding work of Mr. Don Burke. Last week, Don was recognized as the festival volunteer of the year by Special Olympics Canada.

Don is a lead organizer for the Special Olympics festival breakfast in Ottawa and has been involved with the Special Olympics for well over a decade. Under his leadership, the breakfast event is now in its ninth year

and has raised over \$150,000. He has not only worked to raise a significant amount of money for the Special Olympics cause but has been a consistent contributor to the Ottawa community.

Don has also served as chair of the board of St. Patrick's Home and its foundation. St. Patrick's is a long-term-care home in Ottawa South, with a 110-year history in Ottawa. During his tenure as board chair, he oversaw the plans for the redevelopment and expansion of St. Patrick's Home. I worked with Don during this time, and his patience and professionalism contributed greatly to the collective success of this project. Next month, a new and expanded St. Patrick's Home will open for residents.

To his family—Nancy, Colin, Adam and Justin—I know that you're very proud. Don, thank you for your hard work and selfless contribution to our community.

1310

YOUTH OF OXFORD COUNTY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the youth of Oxford county and their interest in the political process.

Last Tuesday, I attended an event in Woodstock for politically interested youth in Oxford county. The event was run by Ian Heikoop and gave our youth a chance to share their priorities with federal MP Dave MacKenzie; the mayor of Woodstock, Pat Sobeski; the mayor of Tillsonburg, John Lessif; and myself.

The number one priority, as voted by the group, was how to manage the increasing government debt. In fact, debt received more than double the amount of votes than the next leading issue.

Many expressed concerns about the dangerous cycle debt creates: higher taxes, lower consumer spending and the loss of jobs. Instead of perpetuating that cycle, the youth offered a logical solution: lower taxes to increase consumer spending and, as a result, create jobs.

Another major priority was how to balance improving health care while keeping costs under control.

One of the other issues they raised was the lack of jobs in today's economy for new graduates. Some even told stories about colleagues who had finished post-secondary education only to end up back at the same job they had in high school.

I was impressed to hear from the young members of our community at this event and happy to have the chance to hear their priorities from them. I hope that we will have more events like this, as the knowledge and insights of our youth have led me to conclude that the future of our community is in good hands.

ÉLIZABETH ALLARD

M. Phil McNeely: C'est avec une grande fierté que je félicite l'élection d'une résidente de ma circonscription d'Ottawa-Orléans à la présidence de la Fédération des aînés et des retraités francophones de l'Ontario, la FAFO, M^{me} Élisabeth Allard.

Franco-ontarienne de naissance, Élisabeth Allard est bien connue pour son lobbying auprès des gouvernements et pour son implication dans les grands dossiers de la Francophonie. C'est plus de sept ans d'implication auprès des aînés pour M^{me} Allard qui l'amène aujourd'hui à la présidence de la FAFO, qui compte 8 000 membres.

Elle est aussi représentante de l'Ontario à la Fédération des aînés et aînés francophones du Canada. Elle y a d'ailleurs piloté de nombreux dossiers reliés aux aînés francophones, tels que le régime de pensions du Canada et le règlement sur les maisons de retraite en Ontario.

Les membres votants ont aussi donné un mandat de deux ans à M^{me} Allard lors de leur assemblée annuelle qui se tenait la semaine dernière au Centre des congrès d'Ottawa.

Je remercie aussi le président sortant, M. Oliva Roy, pour son dévouement à la cause des aînés ontariens.

Je tiens également à féliciter M. Georges Orfali, ancien président du Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario, pour son élection par acclamation à la vice-présidence de la FAFO.

BANCROFT HOSPITAL AUXILIARY

Mr. Todd Smith: I rise today to recognize a great community effort by the Bancroft detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police and the federal crown office.

The whole thing started about four years ago, when a drug action team member in the detachment commenced a local drug investigation. The conviction in this case led to the federal crown attorney's office getting a forfeiture order for the proceeds of crime.

In July of this year, the crown's office contacted the Bancroft detachment of the OPP, looking for input on a suitable local charity that had the ability to handle the \$50,000 donation. Bancroft OPP detachment commander Mark Wolfe wanted a charity that would benefit every resident of North Hastings. The detachment decided that one charitable cause in North Hastings stood out as fitting those requirements: the Bancroft hospital auxiliary.

With all the hardships that have faced North Hastings this year—communities having to deal with the York River flooding, among other things—it was a true inspiration to the community that the federal crown office and the OPP detachment could come together to support the Bancroft hospital and its auxiliary. This is just an example of the extraordinary community spirit that we've seen on display in North Hastings this year.

My thanks go out to the federal crown attorney's office for the work they did to gain the forfeiture of funds, and I'd like to thank the Bancroft detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police for their recommendation and their hard work to conclude a successful investigation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO
AMENDMENT ACT(PROHIBITING FLAVOURED TOBACCO,
NEW TOBACCO PRODUCTS
AND SMOKELESS TOBACCO), 2013LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI
FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE
(INTERDICTION DU TABAC AROMATISÉ,
DES NOUVEAUX PRODUITS DU TABAC
ET DU TABAC SANS FUMÉE)

M^{me} Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 130, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to prohibit certain tobacco products / Projet de loi 130, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée pour interdire certains produits du tabac.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The act is quite simple. The act presently says that no person shall sell or distribute a flavoured cigarillo unless it is prescribed in the law. This bill would ban all flavour except for menthol. It would also prohibit the sale and distribution of new tobacco products and smokeless tobacco products, and it will impose severe fines. The fines range from \$50,000 for an individual who is caught selling flavoured tobacco, to \$300,000 for a corporation that sells either a new tobacco product, a smokeless tobacco product or flavoured tobacco products. It's as simple as this.

YOUTH SMOKING
PREVENTION ACT, 2013LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PRÉVENTION
DU TABAGISME CHEZ LES JEUNES

Ms. Matthews moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 131, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / Projet de loi 131, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'll make my statement during ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I rise in the House today to introduce the Youth Smoking Prevention Act, which would make amendments to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and make certain amendments to Ontario regulation 48/06.

Together, these initiatives will take strong action to reduce kids' access to tobacco and to protect the people of Ontario from exposure to tobacco smoke. Quite starkly put, these initiatives will save lives.

You will recall that the first pillar of our action plan for health care is keeping Ontario healthy. Within that pillar, I set the target of having the lowest smoking rate in Canada. These legislative and regulatory changes would move us in that direction.

There are very compelling reasons for tackling tobacco use. Smoking is the number one cause of preventable death, preventable disease and premature death in Ontario. Tobacco use accounts for about 13,000 deaths in Ontario each year. That means that every single day, 36 people in Ontario die from smoking. Every day—yesterday, today, tomorrow—36 people will die, each and every year, and 36 families will grieve.

We are taking this action so that some of those lives may be saved. People who oppose these measures should ask themselves one question: If 36 people died each and every day from any other preventable cause—traffic collisions, food poisoning—wouldn't they demand that government take action?

1320

The human toll is almost unimaginable. Smoking places a huge burden on our health system, too. One in 10 acute care beds is occupied by someone who's in hospital because of tobacco. Smoking causes 80% of lung cancers and 80% of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease cases.

Every year, tobacco-related disease costs the province an estimated \$1.9 billion in direct health care expenses and an additional \$5.8 billion in indirect costs such as lost productivity.

In 2005, our government rose to the challenge of reducing tobacco use with the creation of the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy. That launched Ontario as a national leader and an international leader in tobacco control. The strategy takes action on three fronts. The first is helping people to quit. The second is preventing people from taking up tobacco use, especially young people. Third: protecting children and adults from exposure to tobacco use and tobacco smoke. We took this comprehensive approach because we knew it would be effective in reducing tobacco use.

Research has shown that when government is highly involved in tobacco control with strong legislation and programs that ensure that people have information and supports, fewer people smoke. I'm very proud to say that

since 2000, Ontario's smoking rate has dropped from 24.5% to 19%. That means 255,000 fewer smokers.

But despite its successes, the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy's interventions to reduce smoking rates are being undermined on a number of fronts. For example, youth smokers are particularly susceptible to the availability of flavoured tobacco products. Kids are exposed to tobacco use and tobacco smoke on playgrounds and sports fields, and seeing adults smoking on restaurant and patio bars leads young people to believe that it's a social norm, which may increase the likelihood of them starting to smoke.

While we have come a long way and have achieved some great results, we must take stronger action to reach our ambitious goal of having the lowest smoking rate in Canada. We must do all we can to make smoking less visible and reduce its social acceptability.

Our proposed legislative and regulatory amendments, if passed, would implement our government's commitment to increase fines, focus on protecting kids and youth, and move us closer to our goal of reducing tobacco use in Ontario to the lowest in the country. To prevent children and youth from accessing tobacco products and protect them from the harmful effects of smoking, the proposed legislative and regulatory amendments would, if passed:

- increase fines for those who sell tobacco to kids, making them the highest in Canada;

- clarify that it's prohibited to offer promotional items with the sale of tobacco;

- prohibit the sale of tobacco products containing flavouring, like bubble gum or grape, with certain exemptions;

- strengthen enforcement tools and give health inspectors the authority to take samples from water pipes and test for tobacco in places where smoking is prohibited; and

- prohibit the sale of tobacco on post-secondary education campuses and specific government of Ontario properties.

While we want to reduce youth access to tobacco products, we also know that it's important to limit young people's exposure to tobacco use. We want to protect youth from second-hand smoke and we also want to denormalize smoking in settings where youth see adults smoking.

If passed, proposed legislative and regulatory amendments would prohibit smoking on the outdoor grounds of hospitals and specific provincial government-owned properties while allowing for certain designated outdoor smoking areas, and it would prohibit smoking on playgrounds, sports fields, and restaurant and bar patios.

We know that public engagement is crucial. To facilitate this engagement, we'll be posting a summary of the draft regulatory measures on the government of Ontario's regulatory registry for public review and comment for 45 days. I want to assure the people of Ontario that there is strong support for these initiatives among our partners, such as the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, the

Canadian Cancer Society, the Ontario Lung Association and the Ontario Medical Association. Furthermore, research shows that 66% of Ontarians agree with prohibiting smoking on patios, and 70% of people in Ontario agree with prohibiting the sale of tobacco products containing flavouring.

Many municipalities have already acted: 58 municipalities representing 61% of the population have already banned smoking on playgrounds; and 45 municipalities, representing 37% of the population, have already banned smoking on sports and recreational fields and facilities. Similarly, nine Ontario municipalities currently have a full smoking ban in place on patios. A province-wide ban would make it easier for businesses and patrons to comply with the law and would provide complete protection for workers, patrons and kids everywhere in Ontario.

These amendments, if passed, would strengthen our ability to reduce kids' exposure to tobacco smoke in their daily lives and help prevent our young people from using any tobacco products. Selling flavoured tobacco products is one of the few remaining ways that tobacco companies have of marketing to our kids, and we have a responsibility to act.

Again, I'd like to thank our valued health system partners as well as everyday Ontarians for their support of this proposed legislation and for their dedication and commitment to the health of the people of Ontario. We are taking this strong action as part of our government's plan to invest in the health and well-being of our people so they can live healthier lives and contribute to the growth of our economy.

I urge all members to support these legislative and regulatory amendments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's now time for responses.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm very pleased to rise today to speak on behalf of the PC caucus with respect to the Youth Smoking Prevention Act, which will make amendments to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and associated regulations.

I haven't yet had the opportunity to see the bill that was tabled by the minister a few moments ago, but I understand through various reports that have come out in recent weeks that the bill has the following themes that have been outlined by the minister:

- (1) prohibiting the sales of tobacco products containing flavouring like fruit flavours and bubble gum;

- (2) prohibiting sales on post-secondary campuses and specified provincial government properties;

- (3) banning smoking on restaurant and bar patios; and

- (4) increased fines for those who sell tobacco products to youth.

The Ontario PCs support restricting the sale of candy- and fruit-flavoured tobacco products. Marketing tobacco to taste similar to candy is encourages youth to start this unhealthy habit, and it certainly something that we should try to stop here in Ontario.

The Ontario Lung Association, the Heart and Stroke association and the Canadian Cancer Society have been

very instrumental in educating me and my colleagues about this important issue and the dangers that candy-flavoured tobacco has caused.

I would also like to say thank you to the member from Nickel Belt. In 2010, she brought forward a private member's bill prohibiting stores from selling flavoured cigarillos. The industry, of course, responded with other variations of candy- and fruit-flavoured tobacco that is aimed at Ontario's youth. To her great credit, the member from Nickel Belt, even again today, also filed a private member's bill on this very issue. She is to be congratulated for her dogged advocacy on this issue.

We would also like to consider what the government understands with respect to the prohibition of sale of tobacco at post-secondary institutions and government properties. The proposal certainly seems reasonable; however, we would like to see further details and we look forward to a briefing from the ministry in the next short while.

The Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association has expressed some concerns about banning smoking on restaurant and bar patios. The president and CEO of ORHMA—as it's known—Tony Elenis, has said that this proposal will result in the following: "Smokers will still go outside near the patio and they will puff cigarettes at passersby who are not expecting a puff of smoke." Mr. Elenis has also stated that, "Under the existing regulations, which we are happy with, customers and businesses" are able to "make a choice."

ORHMA has suggested that prohibiting smoking on patios will result in revenue loss for businesses and have a negative impact on small business owners. Therefore, the association has asked that a decision on banning smoking from patios be delayed until the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment is able to review the financial impact of banning smoking on restaurant patios across all municipalities in Ontario.

ORHMA has advised us that the ministry did not consult with their group prior to proposing this bill and therefore they were not able to express their concerns there. This is something that I think bears further consideration. We need to achieve a balance. Certainly we want to protect youth, but we also want to make sure we don't drive even more businesses out of Ontario.

1330

Finally, increased fines for those who sell products to youth would be a proposal we would support. This would help encourage those who sell tobacco products to stop selling to Ontario's youth.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, although we haven't seen the specifics of this bill, I look forward to discussing this matter further with the ministry, with stakeholders and with my colleagues. Anything that is going to protect the health and well-being of young people in our province is something we would certainly support in general.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to add a few words to the introduction by the Minister of Health of a bill that would ban flavouring in tobacco products. Mr. Speaker, you and I first introduced such a bill in 2008. It

became law; it was enacted. But by the time the ink was dry on that bill, the industry had found a loophole.

Since that time, I have tried to close those loopholes. On April 4, 2011, I introduced Bill 176. Unfortunately, this bill was allowed to die on the order paper when we had an election. Not to worry. I reintroduced a bill banning flavouring in tobacco products on April 17, 2012. I reintroduced it on October 2, 2012, and I did it again today.

You may be wondering why. Well, although I like what the Minister of Health had to say today, I'm a little bit jagged that it will actually happen. What I want is action. I don't really want feel-good words. So just to sort of make sure it happens, I decided to put the bill forward.

You have to see, Mr. Smoker—Mr. Speaker; sorry about that. I'll give you the example of Bill 78, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to electronic health records. This bill was first introduced on May 29 of this year. We are now at November 18 of this year, and I have yet to do my lead on that bill. You know what that means? That means they introduced a bill, legislation that we all know we need in order to move ahead with electronic health records. They made the announcement, they spoke the words, but they didn't follow up with action.

It is the government that decides what bills we are going to talk about. Every Thursday afternoon, we get our little list: "Here's what will be on the docket for next week." But they make the announcement, they bring first reading and then it dies.

I don't want this to die, Mr. Speaker. You and I have worked on that file long enough. I have worked on that file long enough to know that if Ontario was to be serious and ban flavouring in tobacco products, we would save lives. We would save lives by the tens of thousands every year. Why? Because flavouring is how they get their next generation of smokers.

I was in my riding last week with Taylor Lew, my intern from OLIP. He had never seen a smoke shack before, and I have many, many of them in my riding, so I brought him to a smoke shack. He could see for himself 34 different flavours of tobacco products. The smokeless, the chewing tobacco—we kind of lost count because they were piled up, one on top of the other, but the same there: close to 40 different flavours of chews.

The flavoring is what hooks young smokers. It has to stop, Mr. Smoker—Mr. Speaker.

Laughter.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I keep saying that; I know you're not a smoker. I know you're not, and I apologize greatly. I know you understand, and I know we're all going in the same direction.

As an MPP in opposition, I get one chance every two years to bring a bill forward. The Ministry of Health, with all its resources, gets to bring bills forward all the time. They get to move them through legislation for second and third readings. They set the agenda. So I'm hedging my bets. I want this to go through. I want to save lives. If the minister puts the bill on the docket, we will

talk about it. We will move it to second reading. I want it to become law. But if they don't, February 20 will be my chance to bring this bill to second reading. Too many Ontarians' lives are on the line. I don't want to take a chance. I want to make sure that this becomes law. If the ministry moves this forward with all of their resources, good for them; we will help them do this. If they don't, then this lonely little NDP MPP will use her private member's ballot on February 20 to achieve the same thing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I can't resist: I want to make it public to my wife that I do not smoke. I thank all members for their comments.

PETITIONS

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, presented to me by Jim Freeman.

"Whereas Ontario's minimum wage has been frozen at \$10.25 an hour since 2010, and some workers earn even less due to current exemptions in the Employment Standards Act; and

"Whereas full-time minimum wage workers are living at nearly 20% below the poverty line as measured by the Ontario government's low-income measure (LIM); and

"Whereas minimum wage should, as a matter of principle, bring people working 35 hours per week above the poverty line; and

"Whereas an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$14 per hour would bring workers' wages 10% above the LIM poverty line; and

"Whereas raising the minimum wage will benefit workers, local businesses and the economy by putting money in workers' pockets to spend in their local community;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately increase the minimum wage to \$14 per hour for all workers and thereafter increase it annually by no less than the cost of living."

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from the area of Peterborough. It reads as follows.

"Whereas many Ontarians need health care services at home and 6,100 people are currently on wait-lists for care;

"Whereas waiting for over 200 days for home care is unacceptable;

"Whereas eliminating the wait-lists won't require any new funding if the government caps hospital CEO salaries, finds administrative efficiencies in the local health integration networks (LHINs) and community care access centres (CCACs), standardizes procurement policies and streamlines administration costs;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That a five-day home care guarantee is established and existing wait-lists eliminated so that Ontarians receive the care they need within a reasonable time frame."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Arvind to bring it to the Clerk.

WASTE REDUCTION

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone's responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

"Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

"Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Environment."

I fully support this petition, and I will sign my signature and give it to page William.

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas approximately 20% of Ontario's electricity is produced at the Darlington generating station;

"Whereas in addition to refurbishing the four existing reactors at Darlington the building of new capacity is important for the future of Ontario's manufacturing sector and for jobs and investment in our Ontario;

"Whereas a study by the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters in 2012 concluded the building" of two new reactors "at Darlington would directly employ more than 10,000 people and would support employment for an additional 10,000 others in Canada for approximately a five-year period;

1340

"Whereas Ontario's Ministry of Energy says Ontario Power Generation has already spent an estimated \$180 million in preparation proceeding with the two new Darlington reactors;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Ontario's elected MPPs and the provincial government reaffirm their commitment to the complete refurbishment of all four units at the Darlington generating station and that the Ontario government reinstate the original plan for the completion of the two new reactors at the Darlington generating station."

I'm pleased to sign and support it and present it to Zachary, one of the new pages.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints against children's aid societies; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate complaints against children's aid societies; and

"Whereas people who feel they have been wronged by the actions of children's aid societies are left feeling helpless with nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate children's aid societies."

As I have done before and will do many times again, I agree with this petition, will sign my name to it and give it to page Arvind to bring to the Clerk.

LEGAL AID

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly on population-based legal services funding. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Mississauga Community Legal Services provides free legal services to legal aid clients within a community of nearly 800,000 population; and

"Whereas legal services in communities like Toronto and Hamilton serve, per capita, fewer people living in poverty, are better staffed and better funded; and

"Whereas Mississauga and Brampton have made progress in having Ontario provide funding for human services on a fair and equitable, population-based model;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of the Attorney General revise the current distribution of allocated funds in the 2012-13 budget, and adopt a population-based model, factoring in population growth rates to ensure Ontario funds are allocated in an efficient, fair and effective manner."

I agree with this, will sign it and send it down with Michaela.

MARKDALE HOSPITAL

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Grey Bruce Health Services' Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor;

"Whereas the community of Markdale rallied to raise \$13 million on the promise they would get a new state-of-the-art hospital in Markdale;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announce as soon as possible its intended construction date for the new Markdale hospital and ensure that the care needs of the patients and families of our community are met in a timely manner."

I support this petition, will sign it and send it with page Morgan.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I'm going to sign this and I'm going to give it to Arvind to be delivered to the table.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas small businesses not only employ thousands of Ontarians with well-paying jobs, they also play a vital role strengthening Ontario's economy; and

"Whereas providing tax relief to small and local businesses strengthens the economy and creates a business climate that attracts investment and helps create jobs; and

"Whereas the government has taken several other initiatives to making Ontario the most attractive place to do business in North America;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 105, Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013, intro-

duced on September 24, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Finance.”

I fully support the petition and I'll give it to page Julia.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn’s, Alzheimer’s, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; and

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to direct that the Ontario public health system and OHIP include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme disease in Ontario and to have everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians.”

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support and to send the petition to the table with page Marina.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s minimum wage has been frozen at \$10.25 an hour since 2010, and some workers earn even less due to current exemptions in the Employment Standards Act; and

“Whereas full-time minimum wage workers are living at nearly 20% below the poverty line as measured by the Ontario government’s low-income measure (LIM); and

“Whereas minimum wage should, as a matter of principle, bring people working 35 hours per week above the poverty line; and

“Whereas an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$14 per hour would bring workers’ wages 10% above the LIM poverty line; and

“Whereas raising the minimum wage will benefit workers, local businesses and the economy by putting

money in workers’ pockets to spend in their local community;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately increase the minimum wage to \$14 per hour for all workers and thereafter increase it annually by no less than the cost of living.”

I'm going to sign this and give it to William to be delivered to the table

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. John O'Toole: Another petition here that reflects on Bill 91 from my riding of Durham, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship’s eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24;

“Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees” and other fees “that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

“Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;

“Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships” and pass on costs to consumers;

“Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan” from Michael Harris “that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship’s fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs” while recycling tires.

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Spencer, one of the new pages.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

“Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

1350

“Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

On behalf of the over 1,000 dogs that have been euthanized because of the way they look, I'm going to sign this and give it to Morgan to be delivered to the table.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24; and

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces; and

"Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75; and

"Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships; and

"Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to please suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs."

I support this, will affix my signature and send it with page Cynthia.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 7, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario's school system / Projet de loi 122, Loi concernant la négociation collective dans le système scolaire de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker.

Applause.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: And thanks to all those who applauded; I appreciate it. I am honoured to speak today to this bill, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

As you are well aware, Speaker, this morning all across Ontario, millions of children went off to school. When parents drop their daughter or their son at the front door of the school, when they get them out to the school bus, when they simply do everything they can to get the children out of the house in time in the morning for those children to go to school, they have taken a big step. They have entrusted the safety, the training and the future of those children to this province's education system. Teachers and education workers, principals and trustees, thousands of people do critical work, year in, year out, transferring the skills and knowledge that will be needed for the coming generation.

I just need to note, Mr. Speaker, this is my leadoff speech, and I believe I should be allocated an hour's time on the clock.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We recognize that this is, in fact, the leadoff speech by the New Democrats, and I'll ask the table to fix the clock. I return to the member for Toronto Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. I'm appreciative to all who made this possible.

Hon. John Milloy: Give him four hours.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The government House leader has a twisted sense of humour.

As a society, we build our future freedoms and prosperity through the knowledge, values and skills we pass to the next generation. If we want to have a free society, if we want to have a democratic society, we need to instill in our children an understanding of the world and how it works around them. We have to give them the skills to sort out truth from static, the values that allow us to work together and to take the lead. If we want a prosperous society, we need to give all our children an equal start. A fairer society is a more prosperous society. If we as Ontario want to stand on our own two feet, then the next generation needs to have the skills—the ability to think, to read, to create, to use mathematics—to be players in a 21st-century economy. If we want a healthy society, then our children need to have physical education and the knowledge of health issues to make sense of the world.

This is delicate work at times, demanding work and, since we're dealing with people, not with widgets, work that is often emotionally fraught. Parents put everything they have into their children, and at the same time, they put a big chunk of their hard-earned cash into the hands of governments to ensure that their children are given the best possible chance in life. Such complex and important systems as the education system here in Ontario don't do well when key players are sidelined, as trustees were in the last round of bargaining, don't do well when the front-line workers in the classes and in the hallways are demoralized through actions that take away rights guaranteed by our Constitution, as our teachers and education

workers were under Bill 115, the bill with the Orwellian title, Putting Students First Act, 2012.

Speaker, as we came to the end of the disastrous Bill 115 reign, which I must note was a project coming out of a partnership between both the Liberal and Conservative parties, it was clear that no one wanted to go through that again. No one wants to go through the chaos and demoralization that were damaging to the families of this province and to those who worked in our schools.

When the current minister, Mrs. Sandals, introduced the bill, she had this to say:

"When I was first appointed Minister of Education, my first priority was to rebuild relationships with our partners so we could move forward with a common purpose to improve student achievement. This means putting previous challenges behind us and working toward a bright future. This innovative legislation I am introducing here today will help the education sector move forward with a clear process and common understanding of collective bargaining in the education sector."

Speaker, the minister didn't say why relations had to be rebuilt. The bill whose name will not be spoken, Bill 115, was only alluded to. The bill that poisoned relations with the education community is the "previous challenge" to be put behind us.

This bill is apparently meant to prevent this kind of conflict in future. It may do many things, but it does not have the power to do that. If a government is willing to ignore the Constitution of the land and strip away the rights of Ontarians to negotiate contracts with their employers, then what does the existence of a mere bill mean? If the Constitution is irrelevant, no bill can stand against a government that's determined to do away with democratic rights.

This is what I had to say last year about Bill 115:

"The bill goes well beyond any prior attempt by the provincial government to constrain collective bargaining. The authority given to the minister and cabinet effectively enables them to control both the process of bargaining and the results of bargaining, including the right to strike or lock out, and imposing collective agreements or their forms without any accountability to the Legislature. So all of you in here who are going to get a chance to vote know that you are delegating huge power to the cabinet. We are being asked to sign a very big blank cheque. So ask yourselves: Do you trust this cabinet with that blank cheque? I ask the Conservatives: Do you trust this government, this cabinet, with that blank cheque? Aside from sitting ministers who would like to be seen well by their Premier, is there anyone else in this room who thinks that giving the Premier a blank cheque is a good idea? I don't."

"The act interferes with the collective bargaining process set out under the Labour Relations Act on significant matters, such as wages and sick leave. It violates rights to freedom of association under section 3 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada.

1400

"The act seeks to shield the actions of cabinet from any review by the courts, the labour board or boards of arbitration, in contravention of a legal concept as basic as the rule of law."

It's interesting that the Labour Relations Board and any other arbitrators are prohibited from either inquiring into or making decisions about the constitutionality of the act or whether the act is in conflict with the Human Rights Code.

I have to say, this is pretty thorough. It makes sure that all kinds of legal structures and protections are stripped away. It didn't leave anything to chance. If there's a violation of the Human Rights Code, that's set aside. If there are problems with the law governing relations between employers and employees, those protections are stripped away.

There's an arbitrator who may look at this, do an assessment and conclude there are fundamental problems. That arbitrator can have no impact on the agreement.

The province can use the Labour Relations Board to enforce their agreement, but employees can't use that same mechanism to protect themselves.

Speaker, you know as well as I that if you're in a situation where the law can only be used to beat someone down, and no one can use the law to protect themselves, you've diminished the law, you've diminished the authority of law, and you've diminished the respect for the law, because it has become one-sided. That's what is happening here.

I quote extensively because our experience with Bill 115 was a searing experience in this province. For every member in this chamber, for families across Ontario, for teachers and education workers trying to make sense of a world that, to them, had been turned upside down, it was an experience that we do not want to go through again.

I have to say, this bill before us will not prevent that from recurring. If a government is willing to restrict the use of the Human Rights Code or the labour board for anyone to protect themselves but ensures those mechanisms can be used on the part of the government—in other words, if the scales of justice can be dashed from the hands of justice itself—then let's face it: A bill that formalizes a bargaining framework is not going to stop a repeat of the offence in future.

The problem with Bill 115 was not just a lack of process; it was disrespect for democracy and disrespect for those who work in our schools. It remains to be seen if this bill will help improve the situation in our schools. There's still time to debate. There's still time to hear useful public input at the committee stage.

Having talked about Bill 115, what's the impetus, what's the origin, of the bill that is before us today? The bill attempts to formalize a set of education bargaining practices and solve representational issues that essentially flow from the removal of the ability of local boards to set their own tax rate, an education levy that was on the property tax.

The removal of the ability for local boards to levy their own property tax gave the province complete control over the educational purse strings. However, the formal legislative bargaining framework didn't evolve with this change in education financing.

It's very interesting to me to find that, twice, the minister notes in her leadoff speech that this new system is required because of fiscal constraint. For instance, and I quote the minister, "The current method of collective bargaining may have worked better when school boards had taxation powers, and during periods when investments in education were increasing. But in these times of fiscal constraints, we need a model that encourages creative, collaborative discussions where everybody works together to find solutions to challenging issues."

She refers again in her speech—and I will note that, when I come to it in mine—to fiscal restraint being part of the driver for this bill.

Her parliamentary assistant, the member for Scarborough—Rouge River, comes back to restraint in his speech as well: "Since the government funds education in Ontario, it puts us at the central table, where issues tied to funding are discussed. This will be essential as we move forward in our time of financial constraints. We need to protect our world-class education and find a better way to negotiate while working within our fiscal parameters."

It would be helpful if the government were to clarify in subsequent debate why their focus is so much on needing this bargaining framework to carry forward the agenda of fiscal restraint.

I read the speeches by the minister and by her parliamentary assistant. There were substantial issues like this that were not enlarged upon and need to be enlarged upon. We have several hours of debate ahead of us. The government has the opportunity to clarify these issues and set out to the people of Ontario exactly what this focus on fiscal restraint means in terms of this legislation.

Others have talked about the main components of the bill, and I'll just touch on them briefly.

The act changes the collective bargaining framework in two main ways. First of all, it formalizes the process of central and local collective bargaining. Secondly, it provides for central grievance arbitration.

The act mandates a system of central bargaining on fiscal matters and key matters of provincial educational policy. For support staff, access to central bargaining is not mandatory and, on the surface, appears to be subject to the approval of the minister, although I think there's an assumption that, if one of the parties requests it, it will be granted.

At the central table, the crown is a formal participant but does not appear to be a party in the sense of being subject to the bargaining and good-faith rules under the Ontario Labour Relations Act. Therefore, the central table is a three-party structure, but the crown has slightly different status than the other two parties.

At local tables, the standard employee/employer structure prevails. The crown can designate additional matters to the central table, and the Ontario Labour Relations

Board will be the body to determine if these additional items are central or local in cases where the parties do not agree. There's also a two-track arbitration process in which the crown can participate in the arbitration hearing. The employer—the boards—is not permitted to settle a local case without consent of the crown.

It also appears that a central award decision on language prevails over any local settlements or local arbitration decisions, and there's some clarity that needs to be brought there. A union can be a designated bargaining agent if it represents at least 15 bargaining units.

Speaker, that's the bare bones of the bill that's before us. I think there will be consequences that flow from this centralization of bargaining—not necessarily negative consequences, but consequences nonetheless.

The trustees' associations that function on a province-wide basis will have to invest much more in the activity of the central bargaining body. There's no doubt that the person who runs to be head of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association or the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association—those people will be in a far more powerful and influential position. Within the unions in the education sector, obviously central bodies will be of greater consequence. They will have more formal direct power in terms of bargaining.

The impact of all that is yet to be determined. My guess is that, in the course of the debate and consultations that will happen over the next few months, much of this will become clearer. I've had a chance, since last fall, to talk to stakeholders about bargaining in the post-Bill 115 world, and certainly, as this bill has come forward, those discussions have intensified.

There are a number of issues that have been raised that I want to address this afternoon, and I ask that the government address these issues in the course of the debate. I won't be raising everything that has been raised with me—after all, I only get an hour to speak, although the government House leader was very gracious in suggesting that I be given four hours—but there are some substantial issues that have to be addressed here.

First of all, from the perspective of education workers and teachers, there are issues they believe still need to be sorted out for this bill to go forward, and I would be very appreciative if the government would put forward its response to these concerns.

1410

The first has to do with whether the government is going to be governed by the labour laws that require fair action on the part of employers and employees. As teachers and education workers put it, currently in the bill the government status is as a non-party. It's part of the process, but, in some important ways, stands outside it. The government is part of the negotiations. It will have a major voice in steering them, but it appears that the government is not governed by the Ontario Labour Relations Act rules regarding good-faith bargaining as it is not a formal party according to the Ontario Labour Relations Act—more on this when we talk about how the trustees have responded.

Teachers' groups argue that it should be a formal party; in other words, there should be clear provisions ensuring the government's obligation to bargain in good faith and adhere to fair labour practices.

Here's what Minister Sandals had to say in her leadoff speech at second reading:

"Now we are in a time of fiscal restraint and facing a challenging mandate. In order to produce an improved process more ready to deal with the coming challenges, we want to move to greater consistency. The process should be made into a legal framework that more clearly recognizes boards as employers and provides a clearer role in bargaining for the government as the funder." I note that again: "a clearer role in bargaining for the government as the funder."

"If passed, it will move beyond the voluntary discussion tables and establish a clear legal framework, with clear roles and responsibilities for all parties involved in negotiations. And it will allow the government, as the funder of the public education system in Ontario, to have a prescribed role at the negotiating table where it can bargain directly."

Further on in the speech: "Management representation at central tables would be made up of both the government and the provincial trustee associations."

And again: "With the newly prescribed role for government at the central table, we, as the funder of education in Ontario, will be able to bargain directly about issues that are connected to funding."

Two things: It would be very useful for the minister to speak, as I mentioned earlier, about how she sees this bargaining framework being important in a time of fiscal restraint. I think we, in this chamber, and those who are following this out in the broader population, need to understand that. The second is that it appears that the government is bargaining directly, referenced directly by the minister herself. That reinforces the point that teachers have made that the government has to comply with parts of the law that force both sides in bargaining to act fairly. We need the government's explanation of their position. Maybe there are other factors in this bill that don't immediately come to light or are not immediately visible. It looks like the government should be bound to act in fair ways that the school boards and their employees are bound to act in.

Since the absence of fairness was one of the defining elements in the Bill 115 era, one has to ask why this approach was taken in this bill. Does the government plan to act in ways outside the Labour Relations Act, to take advantage of being outside that framework? Minister, we need your argument here.

I appreciate the fact that you're in the chamber. I know that ministerial duties are not light. Your time is not—what can I say?—unconstrained, and so I appreciate the fact that you take this debate seriously. I think that we, in this chamber, need to hear back from you. What is your analysis on the Labour Relations Act? What is your position on this approach, this concern that has been brought forward by those in the education community?

The second matter has to do with arbitration criteria. My guess is that most of you who are watching this or are in this chamber today don't spend your time studying labour law. I need to note that Ontario provides for third party arbitrators to settle disputes over pay, working conditions and other workplace matters. The arbitrators function like judges to give a decision on a fair settlement between two opposing groups.

The section in this act is very explicit in telling the arbitrators that the ability of the employer to pay has to be considered, but there's no mention, on the other side, of fair remuneration, decent working conditions etc. as criteria.

I know the government argues that they are carrying forward existing conditions, existing language from the Education Act. That may well be so, but that doesn't mean it makes sense. In fact, in a world where there's constant pressure to roll back the gains that working and middle-class people have made to secure a decent life, the loading of the instructions against the employees could have a very damaging effect. If the government is not going to take out the ability-to-pay language, then it makes sense that they update the language to reflect fairness on the other side by recognizing qualifications required, responsibility assumed and nature of the work done.

Again on this, I look forward to the government's response. If we are going to have fairness, then we need as fair a playing field as possible. This is a reasonable concern on the part of those who work for us, looking after our children, educating them day after day.

Also on the manner of the arbitration, I have had it pointed out to me that arbitrators will be asked to put forward findings that apply to the whole system, but whose findings are not binding on the school boards—the employers. So, a contentious issue is brought forward. It's sent to an arbitrator. It's meant to apply to all employers in the province. The arbitrator may well find a particular position, and yet the individual school boards won't be bound by that. Where there's a conflict, the teachers or education workers will have to take the individual board to an arbitrator through a legal procedure to get the matter settled.

That seems a waste of time and money. I don't understand why it's been structured that way, and without a very good reason, I would say that needs to be changed.

Teachers and education workers have said that the scope of ministerial ability to reserve items for the central table is extremely large. I can understand where the government, as the central funder, would like to preserve the ability to define what is happening at the central negotiating table, but it seems to be in conflict with the idea that the division of items that get debated centrally and locally is the subject of the first round of discussion. The government needs to explain why it gives itself the power to make such definitions right off the bat.

Another matter that comes up is that the term of the collective agreements can be set by the government, be they two years or three years or four years long. Teachers

have argued that the term of a contract needs to be negotiated, not set by the government.

It's pretty standard to negotiate the length of an agreement. Both sides see value in setting the term to address issues in a given time period. If you are a teachers' federation or you're a custodial worker in CUPE and you're in a period of high inflation, then you may want to have a very short term contract so that you can renegotiate in a much shorter time frame to protect your purchasing power. On the other hand, governments may want stability. They may see an election coming up in the next six or 12 months and want everything put off for two, three or four years. There is great value in being able to determine the term of a contract, the length of a contract. Here again, the government needs to come forward and explain its logic. If it is solely for their political convenience, they should think again. It's not a good reason to move this part of negotiations out of the hands of the people they're negotiating with.

Now, those are a number of the major concerns that have come from teachers and education workers, and as I said earlier, I'm not covering everything, but a number of main points.

I want to note as well that the Ontario Public School Boards' Association sent forward a number of their concerns, and I want to touch on those as well. I imagine that I will hear from all of the school boards in the next while, before this bill is settled.

One of the concerns of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association is that the minister may, by regulation, require a school board to pay fees to the central organization to support the collective bargaining process, the manner of determining fee amounts and other matters respecting the fees. The Ontario Public School Boards' Association recommends that the government directly support or fund the employer bargaining agents as they have in the past.

1420

Now, it's one thing to say, "You have to come together and bargain collectively"; it's another to say, "I'm going to tell you how much you have to allocate. I'm going to tell you the manner in which the funds are allocated." As we all know, school boards are financially stretched and stressed. Having negotiations at two levels is a useful thing, maybe a beneficial thing, but it can be a costly thing. We don't want to be in a situation where school boards are forced to take money away from their operations, away from their classrooms, in order to pay for these negotiations. It's a cost of running the education system. There's logic in the school boards' association asking for financial support to do that.

The provision that allows the employer bargaining agency to be substituted if, in the minister's opinion, the employer bargaining agency is unable or unwilling to perform its duties—in other words, if the government says, "You public school boards aren't coming to the table. You aren't bargaining. You're staying away. We're going to appoint someone else, and they'll negotiate on your behalf"—is a pretty substantial move. I'm curious

as to the government's thinking. I assume that there may, from time to time, be extraordinary circumstances, but such powers have to be constrained. Such very substantial powers in dealing with another level of government have to pass a variety of rigorous tests and be used only in very narrow circumstances.

Here again, we need to hear from the government. If a province-wide federation of school boards decides—and I say this even though I believe it's unlikely—to play some kind of game with bargaining and holds back as a way of exerting pressure on the province or on their employees, then I understand why the government may want to step in. But frankly, the restrictions on such activity have to be very tight. Arbitrary action on the part of the minister, any minister, in this matter has to be constrained.

The public school boards go on to say that the provision that an employer bargaining agency, in this case the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, "shall co-operate in good faith with the crown in preparing for and conducting central bargaining" when there is no reciprocal requirement for the crown to co-operate in good faith—that strikes me as pretty fair. If the government of the day doesn't deal with the school boards in a way that shows good faith, doesn't show a reasonable approach, if the government of the day isn't held to the same standard as the legitimate school board governments are held, that doesn't strike me as fair, reasonable or, ultimately, workable.

There's one other matter I want to address briefly—and it's one that is going to have to be worked out, I think, by the players involved and by the government—and that's the nature of bargaining in the francophone school system. I've had interest expressed on the part of the association of francophone teachers, AEFO, that they would like to bargain with both boards in the francophone system at once at a central table. Now, things that may appear simple at first glance sometimes become wildly more complex than one would want. I am not suggesting that we thrust anything upon the employers or the employees in the francophone system, but I would ask that the minister, who has said to me that she believes there's a way to work through this, talk with the employee associations, talk with the employers and see if, in fact, there can be a meeting of minds on this so that the quality of the negotiations in the francophone system is as high as the quality of negotiations in the English-speaking system. When you have relatively small school boards, they don't always have the same level of resources to carry forward the analysis and negotiation that one needs. I hope that the minister will take the time to sit down with the players and find a way forward on this.

We in the NDP have not yet decided on the amendments that we will be putting forward, the amendments that we will be supporting, but we have decided that this bill should go forward to committee for public input, for debate and for amendment.

I want to talk about the larger stresses that the education system faces. I want to talk about those factors that

will make it possible to come to negotiated agreements and not come to negotiated agreements, because I believe that far bigger than the question of the framework is the question of the funding that's on the table. A system that is constantly stressed, that is not able to provide the resources necessary for the task at hand, is going to have a great deal of difficulty coming to an agreement with the women and the men who actually provide education in this province.

I also want to talk about what I see as a growing problem in the education system, and that's inequality. Speaker, as you and many others may well be aware, I don't have a long history with the education system in this province. I'm relatively new to this as a critic. But one thing that has struck me in the few years that I've had the opportunity—actually, the privilege—to work on this portfolio is the stress on the system. I see parts of the education system left untended, underfunded, so that other matters can be taken up, so that announceables or photo ops can be properly funded. I'm worried about this moving around of funds to increase the chance for photo ops while substantial education funding matters are set aside.

As of 2013, the Toronto District School Board alone—I'm not talking the Toronto Catholic District School Board; I'm not talking Ottawa, Hamilton, London, Thunder Bay, Timmins—just one school board, reports a deferred maintenance bill of \$3 billion. That's a lot of undone maintenance. That's a lot of leaky taps, leaky roofs and masonry that's not attended to. I know that looking after the students, the children in the classes, is our first priority, but ultimately, if the building is not in good shape, it has an impact on the health and the safety of all those who work in it.

I'd just note, for curiosity's sake, that at the same time, the Ontario colleges report a deferred maintenance bill of almost \$600 million.

Effectively, this government is borrowing from maintenance budgets to pay for other education investments. This is a very, very expensive way to borrow money. It's invisible at first, but when the bill comes due, it can be extraordinarily large.

People for Education, in their 2013 report, note that the number of students per special education teacher continues to increase. We need to deal with special education. Children with autism, children with any exceptionality that requires extra support, deserve good support.

The number of children waiting for special education may have declined, but the size of the workload for special education teachers has gone up, effectively diluting their ability to serve those children.

The number of schools with music teachers and librarians continues to decrease. Again, key investments that allow the government to claim they're meeting their goals are where the money goes, and the rest of the system is forced to carry the stress. And that approach has to change.

1430

The Liberals are moving shells around with the money underneath, dealing with the most visible, the most politically salient issues while others and other parts of the education system are picking up the bill.

Part of the function of our education system is to reduce inequality. To the extent that every child gets an equal start in life, we increase the chances that all will have a chance to live well. To do that, we need to ensure that our system can correct for inequality in the larger society. It will never do it perfectly, but it does have to, even in part, be addressed.

In the city of Toronto, the model school system has been an attempt to address that inequality by putting more resources into schools that support a larger population of students facing disadvantage at home. The province allocates Learning Opportunities Grants to school boards to boost funding for schools with a higher percentage of students that need extra support, but, as Social Planning Toronto reports, these funds are not "sweated"; they're not locked in, so they can be reallocated to other purposes.

Because the overall funding doesn't match the needs of the Toronto board, two thirds of the Learning Opportunities Grant is reallocated to other needs. Here is what Social Planning Toronto had to say in their recent report, *A Triple Threat to Equity*:

"Given the terms of the LOG and ESL/ELD funds it looks as if the needs of the province's most marginalized students are protected. The reality in Toronto schools, however, is much different. As the Toronto District School Board endeavours to provide an education that will prepare students for the 21st century on increasingly tight budgets, the board has taken to balancing its budgets using the 'unsweated' (unprotected) LOG and ESL/ELD grants—money intended to support Toronto's most marginalized students. This leaves teachers and schools without the needed resources to provide equitable learning opportunities for their students with the greatest need.

"The TDSB, and many other boards in the GTA, find themselves in this situation due to declining budgets and flaws inherent in the province's education funding formula, which, despite promises, has not been renewed since its creation 16 years ago. In 1997 the province undertook a massive restructuring of the educational system, which introduced the funding formula, saw the amalgamation of a number of boards and at the same time, removed the ability of local boards to issue taxation levies to compensate for the provincial funding gaps. Ever since amalgamation, the TDSB has experienced massive budgetary shortfalls and faces a growing structural deficit.

"The funding formula does not provide sufficient funding for the basics of the system—the payment of teachers and administrators as well as the operation and maintenance of school facilities." Here, they cited Hugh Mackenzie of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. "The TDSB reports that over 85% of its budget is

used to pay for operating line items such as salaries and benefits. The board faces an additional challenge as a result of fluctuations in enrolment. Enrolment declines have had a negative impact on the amount of funding it receives annually, as funds are tied to each student. Additional funding challenges have arisen with the rollout of the province's full-day kindergarten program. The most conservative estimates find that the province is annually underfunding the board by approximately \$338 per child for this program, contributing in large part to the TDSB's structural deficit.

"Additionally, the TDSB experiences shortfalls amounting to tens of millions of dollars in funding for special education, learning opportunities and English as a second language."

These sorts of problems are not just felt in Toronto; they are felt across this province, but they are especially present in urban boards, where poverty, unemployment and immigration rates are higher. In this I cite, again, Hugh Mackenzie from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. In practical terms, that has meant that inequality of opportunity for students is perpetuated.

This past weekend, reporters Caroline Alphonso and Tavia Grant reported in the *Globe and Mail* that school performance reflected the income levels of the community the school was situated in. The headline, "Where Earning Meets Learning," was really great, because it summarized the whole article.

"In Toronto, income inequality is the highest in Canada—and wealth and test scores are going hand in hand. Rich areas are home to high-scoring schools, while schools in poorer areas lag."

It's pretty straightforward: If you're in a school that has a high-income catchment, then there are a lot more services and supports provided, and the reverse is just as true.

People for Education, in their 2013 report, *Mind the Gap: Inequality in Ontario's Schools*, make it clear that the problem is not just in Toronto. Children are being left behind, and that means trouble for them and our society. Here's what People for Education had to say in their 2013 report:

"Learning Opportunities Grant:

"There is some provincial funding provided to boards that is partly based on student characteristics such as family income, lone-parent status, and parental education. But the funding—known as the Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG)—was cut substantially in 2006, and its focus diluted so that it is now intended to fund a number of programs for all students, including a variety of literacy and numeracy programs, and the province's Student Success Strategy.

"There is no requirement in Ontario's education policy that school boards spend the LOG funding on measures that have been shown to ameliorate some of the impacts of socioeconomics.

"In addition, the province has not acted upon long-standing recommendations to strengthen the grant and measure the effectiveness of the programs it funds."

They note:

"A recent study by the Toronto District School Board used detailed administrative records and school and individual level demographic data to show other worrying trends in special education:

"Students in schools with higher family incomes were much more likely to be identified as gifted, learning disabled or autistic"—it was much more likely that someone had the time to do the identification and make sure they got support.

"Students in schools with lower family incomes were more likely to be identified with language impairment, developmental disability, mild intellectual disability, or behavioural issues.

"Students in schools with lower family incomes were also somewhat less likely to be formally identified (which entitles them to services under the Education Act)."

Inequality can close off options to people—to children—for their whole lives. It can damage their lives. But inequality also damages whole societies. The International Monetary Fund reported recently that greater income equality increases the strength of economic growth and reduces the frequency of boom-and-bust cycles, as well as making sure that more investment is available. In other words, equality is good for the economy; inequality weakens it.

Poorer health outcomes, more crime and more social unrest are all part of the impact of inequality. Inequality of opportunity that comes from a failure to invest in our students means that our society will be poorer. It increases the pressures that lead to inequality in our schools. This is a downward spiral.

I raise this because this bill is not being debated in a vacuum. Schools don't exist in a vacuum. They'll be affected by bigger factors that will determine if talks about wages and working conditions in any framework will work or not.

One of the big factors that will determine the failure or success of any future talks is the state of provincial finances. We've had a decade of corporate tax cuts, which has left what Mark Carney, former head of the Bank of Canada, called piles of "dead money" in corporate vaults, money that's not creating jobs. That policy failed, and at the same time that policy squeezed the lifeline of adequate funding to the education system as well as the rest of the public sector.

In 2012, in the lead-up to the budget, the *Toronto Star* recognized this negative impact of corporate tax cuts in an editorial. "Corporate Taxes: Now Is Not the Time for Ontario to Cut Them," was their headline.

"Ontario can not afford to cut corporate taxes again. Besides, they are already more than competitive."

1440

Yes, Speaker, we have been cutting corporate taxes, leading to underfunding of our education system, a lack of support for our children, leading to conflict with educators, and we've done this more than was necessary to carry through an agenda that the Liberal Party has been

promoting. Even the Star recognized that Ontario's corporate tax rate is already competitive with other provinces and well below those in Great Lakes states. At 11.5%, Ontario's rate is the lowest in the country but for three provinces at 10%—British Columbia, Alberta and New Brunswick—and BC's latest budget calls for its rate to go back up to 11% in two years.

They write: "There's good reason why Bay Street has barely raised an eyebrow at the increasing suggestions that the provincial budget will halt plans to drop corporate tax to 11 per cent this July and 10 per cent next year. The substantial corporate tax reductions that have already taken place, elimination of the capital tax on business investment, and the introduction of the harmonized sales tax are already saving businesses \$7 billion a year."

Speaker, \$7 billion is a lot of money; \$7 billion would make a real difference in terms of the operation of our schools, in terms of dealing with our deficit, in terms of addressing a myriad of problems that we need to have addressed if we're to build a society that's functional, sustainable, fair and prosperous in the long run.

There is ample evidence that most businesses have hoarded their tax breaks and banked their profits rather than put them into job creation and productivity growth, the key to future prosperity. We spent a decade cutting corporate taxes to create jobs, which weren't created. We spent a decade cutting corporate taxes and smothering investments that are needed in the infrastructure of this province, in the people of this province, in the children of this province. A continuation of that policy, a continuation of further tax cuts, of privatizing in this province, means less money for schools.

This bill may or may not pass. This bill may or may not be the right answer to what is before us. But I know very well that in the long run, if we don't deal with the financial matters, this bill will be irrelevant, because it will be the availability or lack of availability of money that will determine the success of bargaining in years to come. We need fairness in our agreements with teachers and education workers so that their morale is high, so that we can build an atmosphere of co-operation and respect. This bill alone can't address the issues that need to be addressed to make our schools function well. It can only address part of those issues.

Speaker, I've asked the government to speak, to address a number of the concerns that have been raised by school boards and that have been raised by teachers and education workers. My hope is that they will, in the course of these debates, answer those questions so that when we go to committee, when we get another round of public input, we'll be in a better position to decide what needs to be changed, what needs to be left as is.

Parents may not have deep training in education theory, but they are powerfully invested in their children and in the well-being of their children. This is a part of life that touches on the most profound hopes and concerns that we have as people. When we address issues in this sector, we engage the public in a way that we

don't in any other area, bar none. I expect I will be hearing from more parents as this process goes on.

The bill is relatively technical. It appeals more to stakeholders who spend a lot of time studying labour law and negotiation. But I have to say, Speaker, all of us will hear from parents if this act doesn't add to the stability of the system.

There's a real and substantial challenge here for all of us. We should not hesitate to take up that challenge.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to speak in support of Bill 122.

I listened attentively to the member from Toronto—Danforth and his remarks. I want to be on record to say that the proposed Bill 122 is good for Ontario. It is a made-in-Ontario bill that will support the work of public education, support the work we have done over the last 10 years.

But more importantly, the proposed legislation, if passed, is to create a central table for collective bargaining that will formalize the roles of both the province and the local school boards as well as the various unions.

I also want to respond to the comments made by my colleague from Toronto—Danforth, having been a former trustee for the Toronto District School Board. The sweating of the different envelopes that the province gives to local school boards provides an opportunity for the schools to have local autonomy and provides the school boards with an opportunity to make local decisions.

We had an opportunity, when I was there at the school board, whereby the ESL funding was used for other things. Through my motion, that motion was protecting the ESL funding so that that funding would not be used to pay for hydro, water or what have you. That sweating provided that opportunity for local decision-making.

The other thing the member opposite said about the relationship between income and student success: I'm going to challenge that statement, because I know several schools in my riding—Kennedy Public School, David Lewis Public School, Dr. Norman Bethune—have outstanding students because they have great teachers, great support staff and very engaged parents. Those are the ingredients for student success, and those are the ingredients that ensure students will be successful in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm pleased to rise and comment on the member from Toronto—Danforth. I'm glad to see that he has hope in this legislation—we don't see a lot in it. A lot of it is relying on the regulations.

Education in Ontario has slipped. We've heard people in my own riding talk about the consequences of trying to hire local students who have now learned, or it has been ingrained, that you don't have to do things on time; you don't have deadlines to meet. Part of that is the direction coming from the ministry, coming from this government, not to—sometimes we're more concerned about not

offending people than we are with actually getting the job done.

We have a lot of hope that this will make some changes too. I have two daughters and a wife who are teachers, and I hear some of the issues they have. A lot of those issues come from this government and changes they've made over the last number of years. I think it's important that special education—that things that were put in place for the right reasons are actually there when the teachers need them, and the funding is there. I guess he highlighted an issue where the funding is now being siphoned off to pay for basic hydro bills, expenses that it shouldn't need to go to, because these costs have outpaced inflation. When we look at some of these regular inflationary increases, hydro was going up 6% just last week or the week before, and that's not the only increase this year.

We look at trying to get money down to the students, where it makes a difference. We have the basis here in this province for students that should be able to lead the world in education. We want to see that, and we want to see at the end that there are actually jobs for them.

I look forward to further discussion on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to rise to comment on the leadoff done by my colleague the member from Toronto—Danforth on Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. He spoke about the technical nature of the act and the fact that it does attempt to remedy some issues in relation to centralized funding.

1450

I really appreciated his synopsis, of course, but I appreciated how he framed the overall situation of our education system in the province as a stressed system, and historically stressed, really dating back to the Mike Harris era. Chronic underfunding—a funding formula that is yet to be rectified by the Liberal government, yet through various elections, they championed the fact that they were eventually going to rectify the funding formula—has certainly had an impact on schools in my community: schools that have closed due to underfunding, schools that have high ratios of specialized students and those who have special needs, to EAs who support them.

He mentioned something that was news to me, and I think it was probably news to the majority of people who are watching today: There's roughly a \$300-billion price tag out there in deferred maintenance costs for one particular board—

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's \$3 billion.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's \$3 billion. What did I say, \$300 million? It's \$3 billion, and \$600 million in colleges, a price tag, a bill of sale that is yet to be paid that will be a challenge for any government to undertake. We certainly don't see any efforts being put forward on the part of this government to address that issue, which my friend raised today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to respond to the speech on Bill 122 by the member from Toronto—Danforth. I couldn't help but notice the suggestion that somehow this is a system that's under a lot of financial stress, and because of that, there wasn't any job creation—we hadn't created any public sector jobs. Somehow or other, corporate tax cuts and no jobs all got connected.

I think we need to keep some perspective here. There have been tens of thousands of jobs created in the education sector. For primary class size, for full-day kindergarten, for specialist teachers in the elementary panel, and for student success teachers and specialist high-skills major teachers in the secondary panel, there has been a substantial number of new teachers brought into the system so they can support our students in providing better education for them. I think that parents really appreciate that.

Another thing that parents need to understand: Back in the Harris years, or if we go further back, when school boards had taxes, we would bargain multi-year agreements because that gave stability to the system. It meant that from the point of view of parents, when we had multi-year agreements, we worked with our teachers as front-line professionals for multiple years.

Then we went to the Tory model of bargaining, where we only had one-year agreements, and there was no taxation, no stability. It's important to get the government back to the table with its funding so we can have that multi-year stability in collective bargaining and provide our employees, our students and our parents with a stable education system that's focused on student success and teacher professionalism, not the annual bargaining fight.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return now to the member for Toronto—Danforth for his reply.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My thanks to the members from Scarborough—Agincourt, Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry—I always have to look at that to make sure I've got all of them—Essex and the minister herself for their commentary.

I want to speak first to the question of sweatering and local decision-making. I don't disagree that local school boards have to be able to make decisions, and not every item needs to be sweated. But if we're in a situation where the school boards are consistently receiving less money than they need to carry out their full functions, then we're going to get reallocations from areas that I would say most of us don't think should be reallocated. That's a concern, and I think that we in this Legislature are going to have to consider not just sweatering but the whole question of how our schools—how our school boards—are funded.

The member from Scarborough—Agincourt was correct in saying there are schools that do very well, even in areas that have fairly low income. Low income is not a determinant of intelligence, but certainly, if you look across Ontario, schools in wealthy areas tend to have

more resources and the families in those areas have more resources. There is a correlation between income and school outcome. We need in this province to make sure that every child, no matter what their background, gets to fully develop their skills and their talents so they can live their lives as fully as possible and so this province can be built as much as possible.

To the Minister of Education, I appreciate her comments. I want to say that in terms of the relationship between taxation and job creation, my argument is this: that time after time I've sat here and listened to budgets brought forward that took part of the taxes out of the corporate sector, with the explanation that it would lead to a lot more jobs being created. I haven't seen it, nor, frankly, has the current Minister of Finance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure for me to rise. I guess I was a bit surprised that the government didn't take a rotation to speak to Bill 122, School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. I'm a little surprised at that.

I'm proud of my relationship with schools in my riding of Leeds-Grenville. In fact, I had the opportunity during constituency week, on Friday, to return to my former high school, Thousand Islands Secondary School in Brockville. I was pleased to speak to students in Conrad Walpot's civics class. I can tell you that we had a great discussion with the students in that class. I know we're just a little too far—a three-and-a-half-hour drive for students to come to take part in question period. They were very enthused until I told them they'd have to get up at 4:30 in the morning. The ones in front of me were enthused; I don't know about some of the other members. I did say that if they came, we'd welcome them and greet them well.

During the Thanksgiving constituency week, I attended another high school in my riding, Brockville Collegiate Institute. I hope the members will indulge me for a moment. I want to take a few moments while we're debating an education bill to talk to you about something incredible that the students and staff at Brockville Collegiate have accomplished. In fact, as I'm standing in the Legislature, there is a big celebration taking place at that school. It's going to be quite an emotional day for all the students at BCI.

Last month the students launched a safe driving campaign with Amy Neuman from State Farm Insurance in Brockville. Their inspiration for the Celebrate My Drive campaign was Aaron Stevenson, a classmate they lost this summer when he was struck and killed by a vehicle just days before the start of the school year. It was a horrible tragedy that claimed the life of a very popular 16-year-old, a really great young man with a great, bright future.

In grieving the loss of their friend, BCI students decided that they wanted to do something that would honour Aaron's memory. This afternoon, a month after launching the Celebrate My Drive campaign, the school is being presented with a \$25,000 cheque from Amy

Neuman and State Farm. I'm very proud of that. Part of the money is going to be used to create the Aaron Stevenson Music Award and ensure that his name will live on and inspire future generations of students to pursue their passion for creating music. It's a wonderful story. It's a great lesson for these students to show that something good can come out from even one of the worst tragedies that they'd experience in their life. I think they've done a great job in transforming their grief into something very positive that's going to live on for many years to come.

I appreciate the indulgence of my colleagues. I want to thank the BCI school community and Principal Bill Loshaw on doing a great job with the Celebrate My Drive campaign, and I want to congratulate them. I wish I was there helping them celebrate this afternoon, but I'm here debating Bill 122.

1500

Our education critic, the member for Cambridge, Mr. Leone, I thought did an excellent job for our caucus in his one-hour leadoff on this bill. I have to say, as he did, that it is a bill that I think we're prepared to support. We do believe it does implement some things that need to happen when it comes to the collective bargaining process. But at the same time, I think the critic articulated very well that we have some suggestions on how to improve that bill, because, let's face it, we all know what the bill is about. What we have here is the Liberal government's latest attempt to kiss and make up with their former friends in the education system before the next election. The bill is designed to help repair a relationship that their complete and utter bungling of the last round of negotiation left in tatters.

How bad is it, you ask? Do you know what? I think maybe we should ask Ken Coran, one of the union friends of the Liberal government that they hand-picked to be the colour-bearer for the party in the London West by-election that summer. That story, for the government, didn't end the way they wanted it to. In fact, they had held the riding for a decade, and they finished with a distant third-place showing at that by-election. If you asked Ken what he thought, I'd be interested to hear what he'd have to say. I think the result was, in large part, due to the anger the government had sparked among its former friends in education and the disaster they had in the last round of negotiations.

That's a big part of why, despite all the substantive issues we have in education today, we're debating Bill 122 this afternoon. Repairing the relationship with the teachers' unions before the next election is this government's priority, which I have to say is not only disappointing but I happen to think is doomed to fail. I'm sad to say to the Minister of Education that I highly doubt this one bill will suddenly make your partners forgive and forget. I know you had to try something, and this is it. So, hats off to you for at least putting something in the legislative hopper and debating. Again, I'm interested that no one decided that they were going to actually take a 20-minute rotation and speak to it, but at least they've tabled it and called it for debate. So there you go.

The minister, as I think we all know, has spent a number of months reaching out to her partners: the trustee associations, the school board staff, the teachers and, of course, the unions. I note the one key stakeholder that that misses—and, again, normally misses when these folks across talk about education policy; they don't seem to consult them—and that's the parents of Ontario's more than two million students. If parents were ever asked to put on a list what they think the most substantive issues in education are, I doubt very much that they would include anything that is included in Bill 122. I was at lots of events during constituency week. I saw lots of parents. As I mentioned, I was in a school and saw lots of people, and nobody brought the issues that are incorporated into Bill 122 forward.

If parents did get to voice their concerns about how Ontario students are faring in math and science tests or whether our system is truly preparing them for life in this increasingly technological and competitive world, I think that's what parents that I talk to—that's what they want. They want to know that their children are receiving the best-quality education when they're headed off to school every morning, the kind of education that is going to give them the best chance to be successful in whatever future career path those students may want to choose. I think, again, that those are the things that people in Leeds–Grenville tell me they want debated, rather than this.

I have to again talk about the impetus for Bill 122 and the reason that we're not dealing with issues that parents want us to focus on, and that's because we have, in the bill, one repentant partner in a relationship making another desperate attempt to patch things back between the unions and the government. They spent the past several months, as I said earlier, meeting with their partners, and do you know what they're trying to do? They're trying to remind them about all the good times they had together over the years—the good old days, Speaker, when the Liberal government rolled along. But do you know what? Finally, they woke up and, for the first time in a decade, they actually looked around at the financial mess that they've created in the province, and look what happened.

Now, don't get me wrong. The recognition didn't bring about any real change in this government's spend-thrift ways, but we know that because the province's economic and fiscal woes are worse than ever, that did lead them to introduce Bill 115 last year. It was a bill that our caucus supported, because it was the first time we'd ever seen the slightest hint from that side of the House that there was a problem. It was the first time.

However, our caucus would have preferred to deal with everybody in the same way. I think it was pretty obvious what our position was; we articulated it many times in the House. Our caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, preferred that we treat all employees of the broader public sector the same, with a two-year wage freeze. We didn't see the need to try to deal with one group over another. We felt that everybody needed to share in the recovery. It was a pretty easy thing for us to talk about, because the government kept talking as if they

were going to provide some measures. So we supported them.

But you know what? This government again, despite all the wooing that they've done—I just don't see how this bill is going to provide them with a happy marriage again between the government and the unions.

From what I've seen, and from what the partners have said, no one has come out enthusiastically embracing this bill and has given the government the assurances that all is forgiven. I think it's obvious: There's a lack of trust that people in education have with this government after what transpired last year with Bill 115, and they're going to withhold judgment until they see how Bill 122 plays out.

Again, as our critic, Mr. Leone, indicated, he's prepared to support and we are prepared to support this legislation. There are some amendments that we want to put forward, and I'll get to those in a moment.

This is a very technical bill. I think the member for Toronto–Danforth also mentioned that it's a bit complex. We're talking about a process bill. We're not talking about anything that improves education. It establishes just a framework, essentially ground rules, under which the collective bargaining process in the education sector will happen. It's a two-tier negotiating process.

I think it's a good thing, because we know that collective agreements don't just have an impact on individual school boards but, obviously, on the province as a whole. Because the province funds education, I think it's appropriate that there is some formalized collective bargaining process, particularly on the matter of compensation. Going forward, we'll see those issues like compensation, that have broader impacts across the province, being negotiated at that central table.

Anybody who has read the bill knows that it deals with the four boards—AEFO, ETFO, OECTA and OSSTF. There's a notable omission, of course: The support staff have no formal role at the central table. However, it does give the minister authorization to give them access by designating a union bargaining council representing support staff.

It was interesting: I had a meeting with Susan Hanson and Tracey Pinder from CUPE, and I brought that up to them. We had a nice discussion about that, because the way I read the bill, at a minimum, to have access to the central table, a council would have to represent 15 bargaining units. That's the central bargaining component.

The second of the two tiers is that it establishes a process for matters of local concern that will be bargained at the local level between individual school boards and their employee groups.

It should also be noted that the two sets of talks can take place concurrently. One doesn't have to conclude before the other one begins.

Again, I think you need to ensure that the government is at the table to protect the \$21-billion investment that taxpayers make in the education system every year, but I think it's clear that at the same time, there needs to be

flexibility to allow individual boards to directly negotiate with their employees.

I'd like to stand here and say that Bill 122 has got the balance right. I think our critic was pretty clear in his assessment of the bill—that we're going to have to go through at least one round of negotiations under Bill 122 to really find out. That's why the member for Cambridge, Mr. Leone, suggested that a very excellent measure, I think, should be included in the bill. He recommended that a sunset clause, to give us an opportunity to review how the legislation worked following the first round of negotiations, should be put into the bill.

1510

It's not unprecedented, as many of the pieces of legislation that we do pass here contain a provision for the minister to review. But in this case, I don't think it should be five or 10 years down the road; it should be right after the first round of negotiations. So I agree with Mr. Leone that we need to have that amendment put through. I think it makes a lot of sense. Everyone knows that the current contracts in education will expire next summer, and the framework that is laid out in Bill 122 will be the process under which these new contracts will be negotiated.

I had a chance to read Mr. Leone's speech, the member for Cambridge's one-hour lead. I have to say that I sensed a bit of frustration in his voice. This is a structure bill; it's a process bill. He's new to the education portfolio. He just had a change in critic portfolios in September, and I know he's quite eager; he's very keen. I think he would much rather be debating more substantive education issues than a process bill. But really, I'm not surprised by the government. We've seen this government's legislative agenda, if that's even what you want to call it. It's a bit of a mishmash of bills that they've introduced. Even after we helped them clear the decks and had a programming motion to allow some of the legislation to come through so that the government could get on to a more rigorous agenda to create jobs and to get our deficit under control, again what we see is a bunch of bills with quite catchy titles, but in the end, they don't help bring in more private sector investment. They won't create any jobs, they won't get a handle on our province's out-of-control deficit, and in the case of Bill 122, it's not going to implement any changes to improve the quality of education that our sons and daughters are receiving.

I mentioned at the start of my address that I like to go into schools. I love talking to students, teachers and people in the education field. I'm not afraid to talk to people in education, even though there are some things that I support that maybe they don't. I spoke earlier about the across-the-board wage freeze. Again, I let them know my position—that we've got to get our economic fundamentals right; we've got to make some changes in how we do business. But at the same time, I have the utmost respect and admiration for people, like teachers, who spend their time in the classroom. I have the same respect for the non-teaching support staff and the administrators, the trustees. I've seen it with my own kids, and I've seen it every time I visit a school anywhere in my riding.

That's why I'll stand up here today and advocate for changes to the system that are going to help teachers do their jobs better and improve the resources that they have. If I see it, I'm going to talk about it.

I think that would be a far more important discussion for us to have here in the Legislature. I can assure you that's what parents, teachers and school trustees want to talk about. I look at our white paper for education, and the 18 bold proposals that we put forward are examples of things I think we should be debating in this place. The first of those ideas we talk about is to focus on literacy and numeracy. We want to set a target for students to achieve 90% competency in reading, writing and math.

In fact, the first three proposals in our white paper were all on improving student achievement. I just want to quote from a newspaper report that was in my riding last week from the Upper Canada District School Board. The headline says, "Board 'all in' on math scores." The Upper Canada District School Board has recognized it has a problem with decreasing scores on province-wide math tests and needs to do something about it. A very interesting statistic contained in the article really surprised me: The report presented to the board indicated that only "2% of teachers in the public school board have studied mathematics during their post-secondary education...."

Recognizing this, the board—and I want to applaud them for this—has launched a plan to help its grade 6 math teachers deliver a better program to students. They have five math specialist tutors visiting schools throughout the board in an attempt to sharpen the teachers' skills. I think it's a great idea and certainly something that fits with our proposal to hit a 90% achievement target, which we put in our white paper. I wanted to bring that up today. I think that's the type of debate we should have in this Legislature. Again, I think that with Bill 122, there's a small measure. It's one we can support with amendment.

I look forward to hearing the questions and comments of my colleagues on this bill this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Windsor-Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. I take pleasure in commenting on my friend from Leeds-Grenville and his very informative comments on this bill. I noted that he went to the Thousand Islands Secondary School in Brockville, and spoke to the civics class, and then to Brockville Collegiate Institute, BCI, where they lost 16-year-old Aaron Stevenson. Coming out of that loss, as the member suggested, I think a very positive experience will come from the scholarship to help people enjoy music. I wish we could see more of that across our education system.

Then, I had to chuckle when he talked about the recent by-election in London West, where a gentleman from the OSSTF was running for the Liberals after being on the opposite side of the bargaining table when a whole bunch of stuff went down that is still reverberating. It reminded me that the Conservatives were supposed to win that riding. The polls indicated they were well ahead. In fact,

in my understanding—I could be wrong—the leader of the official opposition was in a car being driven to London on the night of the election when he got a phone call that said, “Sorry, Tim, you’d better turn around and go back.”

Miss Monique Taylor: Oops.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Oops, something happened on the way to the polls. Of course, that was Peggy Sattler, a long-time school board trustee in London, a long-time advocate for quality education and special education. Oh man, did she win that riding. She whupped them, I tell you.

So, yes, thank you for that reminder, member. That was great. I just have to say what a great member the new member, the New Democrat from London West, is to join us in this House in this debate. Thank you very much for that reminder.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The Minister for Community Safety and Correctional Services and responsible for francophone affairs.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to speak in support of Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2013.

It always amuses me when the members of the Conservative Party stand up to speak about education. I understand that the member from Cornwall speaks about energy and job creation and not about education, especially if his wife and his daughter are educators. I wouldn’t speak about education also, and against Bill 122, because before we came to power, when the Conservative Party was in power, they had to pick a villain, and the teachers were the villain. Everything they did was to put down the teachers. The kids were more often out of school than in school, with the result that we have all seen: 60% of the kids were graduating from high school. Where the 35% were, I don’t know.

1520

They talk about student achievement. Student achievement is now—we have been recognized in The Economist of October 2012 as one of the three best education systems in the world: not in Canada, not in America, but in the world. Because of what? First of all, we re-established a good relationship with the teachers and valued the teachers, because they do a good job. Every morning, they go to work and do a good job, and it shows in the results of the students.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It’s always a pleasure to comment on my colleague Steve Clark from Leeds–Grenville. What I’ve found since coming to the Legislature is that he’s a guy who does his homework. He always looks at both sides of an issue. When he brings his thought process to the table, it’s done in a balanced fashion. He certainly is a guy whom I watch. He’s out in his riding, as he referenced, out to many of his schools, getting grassroots feedback. He’s hearing at the grassroots and

then he brings those thoughts which we’re all supposed to do.

Like him, I share a great mutual admiration and respect for the teachers and, in fact, all the teaching and non-teaching professionals in our system. But what I think he really pointed out in a couple of very insightful ways is that this bill is really nothing about kids and education. This is a technical bill about labour relations. I’m going to just paraphrase myself. This is almost a backtracking on labour relations because they made a mess of their greatest colleagues—the unions—going through the last election, and this is their attempt to backtrack and try to make friends before we get to the next election.

He noted that none of the partners have really come out excitedly about this plan. No one has really got that trust level back yet, to say, “Yeah, we really trust what they’re doing,” because of how poorly they’ve managed this, amongst many other files.

Our colleague Dr. Leone from Cambridge—we’re prepared to support this, but there are significant amendments. If I recall the number of times I’ve spoken in this House in the last two years, I seem to see that as a recurring theme. They come out and throw some legislation; then they backtrack and they want to look like heroes, that they’ve made this wonderful legislation.

Why can’t we just do things right the first time and quit wasting so much time, energy, resources, not to mention money? I’m going to throw in the \$1.1 billion squandered on gas plants, Mr. Speaker. What could that do to actually improve education across this great province of Ontario if they had not mismanaged our funds on just that one file?

We have said from day one that there should have been a wage freeze across the board. Everyone would have been treated fairly. We wouldn’t be in the mess we’re in, and we wouldn’t have had to bring in legislation like this to try to backtrack. My hope, going on, is that we actually find bills that are going to help students in our great province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It’s a pleasure to follow on the comments by the member from Leeds–Grenville. Member, you addressed a variety of matters before us. I found it interesting that, like your critic, it seems that you are accepting that this bill will go forward at least to committee for debate and amendment. It isn’t often that, so early on in debate, it’s clear that all three parties want to see this go to committee—interesting for me.

The sunset clause that you mentioned, the item that was raised by Mr. Leone: I see more problems coming out of that than solutions, but obviously it’s an amendment that I want to hear Mr. Leone expand on. I understand why there’s an interest in that. This is an untried system, but at the same time, frankly, we’ve had untried systems for the last decade. We do that a lot around here. I’m not sure I want to go through a second round of debate on the negotiation process.

I think that you, member, were correct. I think there's an extraordinary effort being taken on the part of the government to try and make up with the people in the education community after they dragged them through the dirt with Bill 115. That was a pretty ugly time. I need to re-emphasize that this bill, whatever its virtues and whatever its workability, does not prevent a future government from acting in a way that's anti-democratic, biased, discriminatory and, frankly, an abrogation of the rights that people in this province have come to expect from their government.

This bill may give a framework that facilitates negotiation. Unfortunately, this bill does not provide a democratic firewall against bad decisions in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments, and I return to the member for Leeds–Grenville for his reply.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thanks very much, Speaker. I want to thank the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and francophone affairs, the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and the member for Toronto–Danforth for their questions and comments.

There was one thing, Speaker, that I didn't have a chance to address in my 20-minute rotation that I'd like to touch on. It's something that a number of people write to me about and express that this should be changed in the education sector: the need to modify regulation 274 to ensure that the best-quality teacher, regardless of their seniority, is hired to do the job. I've heard from young teachers and their parents who praised my MPP neighbour Ms. MacLeod, the member for Nepean–Carleton, for her private member's bill to rescind regulation 274.

In my opinion, we can't be tying principals' hands when it comes to hiring teachers. I think if the minister is serious about improving the quality of education in Ontario, she will get serious about changing this regulation. It's something that I think will come up in the next round of negotiations, and I don't think she can wait any longer to put those students first and to make that regulation change.

I also find it funny that in Bill 122, which I call the "kiss and make up" bill, the government didn't mention their tattered relationship with the unions. I think when you look back at this government's record, since they took office in 2003, spending has been up by \$8.5 billion in the education sector, and that at the same time when there are a quarter million fewer students in the system. I'll just leave my final address with that last statistic.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill 122. I want to acknowledge so far all the comments and conversations and debates that we've had and insights that have been brought forward by the members here today, because it helps us to understand the perspective of other members, as well as the public that is listening today, the perspective on other parties' views on this bill being presented. We need to have that; we need

to have a fulsome debate on every bill so that people are educated, aware of what's being presented in the House, and they can understand a little bit about it, because it is a very confusing process sometimes when we bring bills forward and they're debated, and on some occasions, there aren't debaters put up, so the public doesn't get a full view of all the members' perspectives on it.

This bill, as I understand it, attempts to formalize a set of education bargaining practices and solve representational issues that essentially flow from the removal of the ability of local school boards to set their own rate on an educational levy or property tax. In other words, the province is trying to gain full control of the educational power strings.

I must admit I'm feeling a sense of déjà vu on this bill, on this issue as well. Didn't the Liberals recently attempt to force agreements and legislation on teachers last year under the previous minister? Didn't we see our schools in a state of chaos because this government refused to negotiate with teachers' groups and boards in good faith? Weren't our children locked out of extracurricular activities while the province sat on the sidelines watching the mess they created?

Certainly, it feels that we have gone back in time and we are watching the Liberals, this time with the new face on the ministry, try to find ways to prevent them from sitting across from our partners in education. But they refuse to sit at the table without an ace up their sleeve. They refuse to play on an equal footing and continue to drum up ways to usurp the bargaining process.

1530

It started with Bill 115, when the government sought to introduce legislation that they knew would not hold up in a court of law, but they did their best to ram it through anyway.

By third reading of Bill 115, we saw truncated committee hearings. There was no public posting of hearings, and in total only five hours of hearings held, not to mention that deputants were notified only hours before they were expected to speak.

Teachers, principals, trustees, boards and education experts who presented at committee hearings echoed much of what the NDP had been saying about the bill all along: that the government manufactured a crisis in our education system. Schools were open and there was no threat of a strike. The bill was not about improving education. In fact, there was not a word in the bill about helping students, despite its deceptive title, Putting Students First. I guess "putting government first" was already taken, Speaker. That bill was entirely about shifting powers into the hands of the government, gaining an edge so they could demand and take what they wanted at the bargaining table rather than understanding that the teachers are our allies, our partners in education, not our enemies who need to be controlled or bullied.

But again the worst part of that bill was in the government's intention of ramming through legislation that they knew would not stand up in a court of law. The very same course of action was tried in British Columbia and

cost the province millions in legal fees and settlements. So I must ask, why is this government taking such a stance? Why would this government copy a behaviour that was so egregious that it was overturned and resulted in settlement amounts that left the BC provincial coffers depleted?

It seems as though this Liberal government has become the “say anything” party. They have and continue to actively undermine the collective bargaining process and deny the importance of the roles and responsibilities of locally elected school board trustees and boards.

Speaker, can I ask for two glasses of water, please? Sorry about that.

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: You get dry in this place. It’s very warm.

All of this action took place while rushing the time necessary for adequate consultation. Even through third reading, the Liberals refused to retract their stance and introduced only one amendment that indicated that the measures in the bill shall not override the Pay Equity Act or the Human Rights Code.

While many in this Legislature will disagree with that assessment, I urge you to recall the statements made by sector partners, including Annie Kidder from People for Education, who said, “The bill shifts significant control out of the hands of school boards and up to the province.... All of this is happening with no public consultation, and under the cloud of a manufactured crisis.”

Ken Arnott from the Ontario Principals’ Council said, “This legislation is premature and is unlikely to withstand a charter challenge. There is no crisis requiring legislative intervention.”

Recently, we have seen the Liberals pulling the same hijinks with EllisDon, and it leaves many of us wondering where exactly this government stands on good-faith collective bargaining. In the case of EllisDon, the Liberals fast-tracked legislation for a long-time party donor, allowing for the organization to shy away from their own obligations in regard to collective bargaining. Are we beginning to see the start of a trend? From this vantage point, it sure looks that way. It appears as though collective bargaining is something that Liberals now feel the need to demonize and shut down. Quite frankly, if the Liberals have changed their position on collective bargaining, the benefits reaped by that process, I urge them to be honest and come forward and declare their intentions publicly rather than continuing down this road of double-talk where they say one thing but mean another.

After last year’s manufactured crisis with EllisDon, the Liberal government has shown their true colours. What’s interesting is that while the opposition have tried to call out and blame the NDP for siding with the government, they are clearly blind to who is lying in bed beside them. The Liberals have clearly adopted the Conservative bedside manner of union bashing, cleverly disguising attacks on public sector workers as good for all of us. But we know these tactics for what they are: thinly veiled attempts to drive down wages and divide workers while

putting more money and control in the hands of the government.

Now, besides this government’s new-found position on collective bargaining, there is a major issue at hand that can no longer be ignored. The Liberals seem to have reconnected with their old habits of reckless spending of public tax dollars. We have good reason to be concerned. We only need to look as far as Ornge, eHealth and the gas plant scandals to see who the Liberals continue to prioritize. Well-connected party insiders are clearly winning the day around here, and I and my NDP colleagues refuse to let that behaviour go unchecked.

There is a reason why, in the most recent budget talks, the NDP negotiated for the creation of the Financial Accountability Office. The public made it clear that they didn’t want another costly election, and we listened. Instead, they asked us to make this minority government work once again, so we did just that. We took the steps that no other party in this Legislature was willing to take, and we created a measured and a balanced response to protect our public dollars.

But now, under Bill 122, the government is once again seeking to have greater access to and control over regional school boards and their budgets while removing their own responsibility as an education partner at the bargaining table.

This new act proposes to change the collective bargaining framework in two distinct ways. It formalizes the proactive process of central and local collective bargaining and also provides for a central grievance arbitration.

At the central bargaining table, the crown is a formal participant but does not appear to be a party, meaning they are not required to bargain in good faith as set out by the Ontario Labour Relations Board. Therefore, the central table is a tri-party structure. However, the crown has a slightly different status than the other two parties. The crown can designate additional matters to the central table, and the Ontario Labour Relations Board will be the body that determines if these additional items are central or local in cases where the parties do not agree.

It also suggests that any local settlements or local arbitration decisions can be overruled by the central bargaining table. All decisions made by the central table will, in fact, override those made at the local table.

Further to that, the government has created a two-track arbitration process in which the crown has the ability to participate in the hearings, and the employer or the school board is unable to settle the local disputes and hearings without consent of the crown.

The crown in this matter is also seeking to amend the designation of who is entitled to be a bargaining agent. The government is now requiring that a bargaining agent must represent at least 15 bargaining units.

In our discussions with our education partners at ETFO, they detailed more than 10 serious concerns with the bill in its current form. That is a lot of concerns for a single bill, which is very telling. Moreover, when OSSTF, EFTO, CUPE, OECTA and AEFO recently met

with the Minister of Education, on November 6, they collectively identified five distinct shared concerns.

The first item they noted was the designation of the crown as a full and equal participant in negotiations. They believe that the crown must be bound by the duty to bargain in good faith as well as be bound by other unfair labour practices provisions under the act, namely sections 70, 72, 73 and 76 of the Ontario Labour Relations Act. Those sections are specifically—I had to look them up; I'm just going to pull those out here.

In section 70, the first one, it says: "Employers, etc., not to interfere with unions." That's section 70.

Section 71: "Unions not to interfere with employers' organizations." I have to retract that; no section 71.

Section 72: "Employers not to interfere with employees' rights."

Then section 73: "No interference with bargaining rights."

Section 76: "Intimidation and coercion."

When we talk about that, we want to make sure that those things are in here, because those are concerns of education experts when we have the crown at the table.

They also have identified the need for the creation of a central table for support staff, and the newly proposed definition of a bargaining agent to be reduced from 15 to representation of 11 bargaining units only.

1540

But most importantly, they believe firmly that the five criteria in the act surrounding the government's interest in arbitration should be removed from the bill and that arbitrations must be entitled to continue without government interference. They state: "If they are not deleted, the act should be amended to add a factor favourable to unions such as: 'The need to establish compensation and other terms and conditions of employment that are fair and reasonable in relation to the qualifications required, the work performed, the responsibility assumed and the nature of the service rendered.'"

The crown must also allow for organizations to be insulated from their intrusions. While we know the government is seeking to increase their control through this bill, they must recognize that there are important changes that all parties would welcome. For example, the sector partners indicated that the proposed legislation needs clarity once a collective agreement is finalized. That goes beyond a mere declaration. They go on to highlight that this approach gives rise to the ability to issue a direction so that the local boards have to implement whatever decision is made by the arbitrator as a means to avoid the unnecessary duplication and re-arbitration of issues in order to obtain appropriate remedies.

Lastly, they identify that the terms "and other powers of the crown" need to be amended. The groups feel that the crown should not have the ability to dictate the terms of the agreement, whether they be two-, three- or four-year agreements. They also disagree with the idea of the crown or minister being entitled to unilaterally decide, based solely upon their opinion, what matter will be discussed at the central bargaining table.

The groups of sector partners believe that all issues, including terms of agreement, should be bargained freely. My colleagues and I agree that greater government control, coupled with unequal footing, does not help our education system evolve in the best possible manner.

This bill is very concerning. It's a very concerning step, but I wish I could say it is a step in the right direction. In its current form, this bill proposes more problems than it solves, and I urge that this government heed the calls for change by our education sector partners.

But I caution the public and our sector partners that this bill does not take any steps toward addressing the manufactured crisis created by the Liberals last year, nor does it prevent this or any other government from heading back down the path to Bill 115 again. Establishing a fair and balanced framework for negotiations is a credible concept that should be pursued, but I believe that fair play must be shown on all sides if we truly want to achieve the best for our students, teachers, support workers and everyone concerned with education in this province.

I know that our education critic earlier has said that we want to see this bill pass forward, and of course we do, because it's important that we hear from teachers and support workers on this bill so that we can make amendments. We can make it better. We can insert new information if we need to make those changes to this bill. So it's really important that we do have a fulsome debate today on this. It's the future of education and relationships between this government and the education system and trustees and the boards, and this is a really important step.

If we get this wrong, we can end up in a situation like Bill 115 again, and nobody wants to see that happen. I know that teachers are very dedicated to making sure their students are the best-educated pupils that they can have at the end of the year, and I know that students love their teachers when they go to school. We don't want this to become any kind of contentious issue. I hope that we are mindful of what this bill will do to collective agreements and that we do the right thing and make sure that all parties have an equal footing when it comes to talking about collective agreements.

I'd just like to summarize by saying that I'm looking forward to hearing more debate on this issue from all sides of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise on Bill 122 and add some comments to those that were just given in a very eloquent fashion by the member from London—Fanshawe.

Very little of what she said I would disagree with. Obviously, there are some differences of opinion around the House as to how things got to here, but this, to me, seems to be a good step forward. The School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, Bill 122, provides a framework where we're able to move forward with the trustees' associations, where the government plays a role, obviously,

and where the unions that represent our teachers and our support workers in the schools can come to the central tables and bring forward any sort of monetary considerations they may have. Any policy issues they'd like to bring forward can be discussed in an environment where free collective bargaining is the method that is used to achieve a settlement.

We have always been able to achieve settlements in the past. Often, relationships get frayed, as they will, in collective bargaining. That's the nature of the beast, unfortunately. But at the end of the day, what happens is, the parties come to a resolution and they move forward.

I think all parties in this House value the public education system that we've been able to build in the province of Ontario. I think it has come a long way since 2003. I'd hate to see that go to waste. I think our students in our public education system are doing incredibly well, especially when we compare them to other jurisdictions around the world.

What Bill 122 does is provide a framework that allows us—when most of the collective agreements expire on August 31, 2014, if all parties bring the right attitude to this framework that's being proposed, we can move forward in a very smooth manner that's not going to impact on the teachers, the students, the parents or all those others who rely on the public education system, either as their place of employment or as where their children attend.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm happy to rise to talk to the member from London-Fanshawe and her discussion on this bill.

It's interesting. She brought up a few issues, one on EllisDon, the private member's bill that we saw changes back and forth on and the Premier flip-flopping, to support and no support and abstaining. I hope we don't see it in this bill.

This bill, as we said, is a process bill. It has nothing to do with education. It doesn't include the parents of the children. But it does look at the process of trying to fix an issue that was created on their last attempt, when they went through Bill 115. They see it now as a threat to this party, as it led to a number of defeats at the polls as people were starting to hold this government to record, whether it be in education or some of the fiscal issues. We talked about an issue brought up as well, some of the issues they've had in the past with eHealth and Ornge, and Liberal insiders who actually did quite well, but at the expense of this province.

I do note that we also talked about some of the issues that this government has supported. I look back at some of the things that they have allowed to happen, like the horse racing industry. Their support allowed this government to literally kill that industry. We look back now, as we've seen racetracks closed, jobs lost—again, just failed policies.

We're hoping we can make the amendments necessary to make this a successful plan. The sunset clause was

something we think is important because we need to evaluate just what has gone on after we have a full round of negotiations, and correct the errors that show up with any legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently, as I always do, to the member from London-Fanshawe. She has been here but a short time, but she has a real grasp of the legislation that comes forward. I really appreciate her balanced and measured approach to looking clause by clause and being able to actually say what the clauses were. Too often in this place, people have notes. Too often in this place, people don't take time to actually read the legislation, particularly tough and complicated legislation, clause by clause. But obviously, the member from London-Fanshawe took that time.

I want to thank her too for pointing out some of the pitfalls that I think were inherent in the legislation from the beginning—pitfalls such as the government superseding the rights of the actual bargaining agents, putting themselves over top of both the unions and the school boards, being able to dictate. This is highly unusual in any kind of democratic procedure, especially when it relates to collective bargaining.

1550

I also want to thank her for talking about the fairness principles, how we have to treat carefully and fairly those remarkable people—teachers, support staff—who work in our schools, who teach our children, who make sure that our children, the next generation, have the tools and abilities that will be required from them or of them after they leave school and go into the workforce. It is important that we treat those people with the utmost of respect. As she so correctly and rightly pointed out, this has not always been the case, either with this government or preceding governments treating school teachers, educators, people who work with our children, with that kind of degree of candour, honesty and fairness.

I would like to thank the member from London-Fanshawe for what she had to say. I would like to thank her again for her balanced and measured approach. I would hope that the members of the government, especially, take her words to heed as we proceed with this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question and comment.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to stand in my place here today to respond to the member from London-Fanshawe on Bill 122, An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario's school system.

I think we all know of the chaos that has occurred in the bargaining processes in the last 20 years, and this bill formalizes the collective bargaining process and brings more order to the system. It does involve the kids; we know it involves the kids. There have been periods in our history that the youth in our schools have been the bargaining chips, used by all sides at times. So we don't want that.

If we bring more order to it, we'll get a system that's going to come out with a fairer result, and we'll treat all sides more fairly. It will give it that structure. It's a complex structure, with the four main boards and all the local interests and the unions and the government. It's not easy, and bringing more formalization to the collective bargaining process is obviously very good.

In Ontario, we have to be proud of what the teachers have done, what the trustees have done and what the educators have done overall in the province. Since 2003, I think the graduation rate of our high school kids has gone from something like 68% to 81%. Tens of thousands of kids now are proud of the fact that they graduated from high school.

We've got a good system. It's getting better every year, and that has been shown by independent organizations. It shows that the Ontario system is an excellent system.

This will make it better. This will bring more order to the system. I know that we can make changes during the clause-by-clause that will make it even better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I return to the member for London—Fanshawe for her reply.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I would like to thank the members from Oakville, Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, Beaches—East York and Ottawa—Orléans for their contributions to this bill.

One of the things that the minister had said—and I'm going to paraphrase. She talked about relationships having to be rebuilt with this bill, and that's some of the purpose of why they introduced this. They also talked about fiscal restraints. This bill—to me, it's very important that we get it right, because when we're talking about rebuilding relationships and fiscal restraints, we're talking about very sensitive things. If you can't make sure that everybody's on board to make this bill a workable bill so that we have fairness and balanced approaches to collective agreements, when we have these local tables now and these central tables, I can see quite the mess happening if it doesn't get done right.

I look forward to this bill passing and that the real work on this bill and the contributions made by the experts—we're going to listen and make sure that it's going to be thoughtful, it's going to be progressive and we're not going to get in a situation in the future where they're going to divide relationships. We're going to bring people together and make sure our education system is what it has always been: productive, thoughtful—and, again, I agree it produces our best students here in the province. We have good-quality education, and we want to make sure we continue that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I really appreciate the opportunity to talk a little bit about Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. To start off, I'd like to put out a question to everybody here in the Legislative Assembly. In my view, we need to ask ourselves, is education

essential? I think I know the answer from everybody here. Really, nobody here would hesitate in responding, "Yes, it is." I suppose my second question is, if education is essential, why is it not an essential service?

There is some confusion out there in our constituencies about some of this, I think partly driven by the fact that, over the years, the profession of teaching has become unionized. I know we've had collective agreements for many, many years—not when I attended school; certainly not at the one-room school that I attended. There was no collective agreement. That would be impossible, because there was only one teacher for eight grades. It was hard to be a collective in that particular school.

But the reality is, we've seen a profession—and I'm a former member of OSSTF—become more of a union shop. Granted, we operate under collective agreements. That's fine. That's legal. That, by and large, can work out well.

Here we are debating what some people have referred to as an education bill, but you look at the title: the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. That's what it's all about. It's not about students; it's not about pupils. I don't hear people talking about students or pupils that much. Some talk about parents. It's about the teachers.

In fact, I noted that our education minister, when she kicked off her lead speech, used the word "students." She did use the word "student," all of four times. Four times out of, I don't know, 3,000 words—probably well over 3,000 words.

In debating this legislation, I guess we can't go home and say that this is all about the kids, or this is about the students, because it isn't. It's about money, and it's about, as the title indicates, collective bargaining.

For far too long, union leaders within this system on occasion have held parents hostage. They've held a gun to the heads of students. I've read this in my local media on a number of occasions, with either the threat of strike or withdrawal of services.

This didn't happen when I was teaching. Again, I was a member of OSSTF. I never even thought of it as being a union.

Teachers themselves will tell you how essential they are until you put these two words together: "essential" and "service." You're not going to see that. In my view, that just may affect the right to strike, obviously. It may affect collective bargaining. So union leaders aren't going to go for seeing education identified as an essential tool.

Teachers strike. We all know they delay a school year. They result in, so many times, students not finishing their year. It disrupts their plans, disrupts their dreams, disrupts the lives of their families. It disrupts the finances of their families. College, university educations or entry into the world of work are put on hold.

On top of everything else, a strike, even a short one—here's a local example that we hear so often—causes nightmares with respect to daycare, for parents, additional money out of pocket for child care costs. Within that

family, within that town, that can result in spending cuts in other areas. It can impact—it does impact—the local economy.

1600

We had an example: Not long ago, in a downtown children's clothing store, the owner had to pay for child care for their student who was out of school. It was an extra month or so, because of a labour disruption in the school. At the same time, the sales that month were down because other parents were doing the same thing. They weren't coming into the store to pick up clothing. So here we are, Bill 122: It's not about education. It's not about students or pupils. It's about unions and collective bargaining.

As I mentioned in the lead, our education minister—I do give credit—did use the word “student” four times, but this isn't an education bill.

So many of the strikes, in my view—I've never been on strike, but they're not about working conditions. I found working conditions were excellent when I taught high school. As member Bailey would say, it's inside work and there's no heavy lifting. Teachers don't go on strike over safety issues; the guidelines are there. I was in a laboratory. The guidelines are there for my environmental science class and my agriculture class.

I guess, very simply, it boils down to money, and I partly question that. I taught high school a number of years ago. I took a cut in pay because I went from a union job to a profession at the time. But by and large, people have the impression that—and, again, thanks to their union leaders, teachers are among the top paid in North America. We know the ratios. We hear this from the unions themselves: “Join the union; you get more money.” We know, by and large, if you compare public sector jobs to private sector jobs, if you look at total compensation, the public sector is about 30% higher than the private sector.

I don't blame teachers; I'm talking about union leaders here. They've created a climate within the school system, essentially luring their union members into more and more of a focus on compensation, and it concerns me, rather than a focus on the students. I use compensation in the broadest sense of the word—wages, salaries, pensions, early retirement, sick-time benefits—a whole host of things beyond just the salary.

Prep time, for example, has increased over the years, certainly since the time that I taught high school in Simcoe. It's paid prep time. Most professions don't have that luxury, coupled with two months off in the summer, paid, Christmas and Easter—

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's not paid.

Mr. Toby Barrett: —an excellent benefit plan. I think we all agree it's an excellent benefit plan.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's not summer paid.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, when I taught, I had July and August off and I got compensated for that—

Interjection.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I wasn't on unemployment.

Compare this, again, to the private sector. Compare this to the budget that we have. I know one of my staff is here this afternoon. Compare that to the budget that we can allocate to our staff in our offices. I'm saying this because I'm a big advocate of pay equity and I'm always disappointed when people argue against pay equity. I guess in some cases some people are more equal than others.

Often in this House—and oftentimes when we are debating yet another educational bill—I know many of us make reference to our first teacher or our first couple of teachers. We have fond memories. I think of two young women who taught me how to read. I was probably in grade 1 or grade 2; there was no kindergarten at that time when I went to school. These two young women who taught me how to read were definitely not in a union. In fact, they weren't paid. They volunteered their time. This was in a school run by the students. It was not run by the teacher. It was a one-room school: one teacher, eight grades. I don't think a union would put up with that now. The two young women who taught me how to read—non-union, non-paid—were in grade 6. People here can be a judge of whether they were successful or not, but I do enjoy reading. I'm not saying I'm good at it, but I do enjoy reading. They were in grade 6, and it was my pleasure a number of years later—probably in grade 7, as I recall, or in grade 8—it was my job, as a student, to teach young kids how to read. That's how we did education in that particular school, Shands public school, a one-room school just down the road from our farm.

A number of years ago, I worked for American Can. I was a card-carrying union member. As a union member, I punched the clock; I was paid by the hour. I had a union steward. I belonged to Can Workers 35, now Steelworkers. It was an excellent job, a well-paying job. You could work on into the night after midnight, all the overtime that you wanted. I walked away from that job, literally walked across the street to Simcoe Composite School, to teach with the Norfolk county board of education. I took a pay cut. I was a member of OSSTF, but I recall being kind of pleased at the time to go from punching a clock to joining a profession.

My father taught high school. My grandmother taught. I do think of teachers as professionals. Maybe this is personal. It just bothers me when I think of the history of my family—we're either teachers or farmers—to see the influence of trade unionism within our education system. It just kind of kind of rubs me the wrong way. It does rub taxpayers the wrong way. We know union jobs pay well. It has a dramatic impact on the taxpayers' ability to pay. We all know the taxpayer, the parent of the student, does not have endless pockets. Given Ontario's economic decline and this government's wasteful spending, the taxpayer can no longer afford to compensate government workers at a level considerably higher than those taxpayers themselves. When I say compensation I mean wages, salaries, benefits, pensions, early retirement, sick time and everything else that goes along with that.

In fact, when I taught high school, I didn't take sick time. I wouldn't let a supply teacher in my class. If you knew the students I had, you wouldn't either. But I recall speaking with my physics teacher—a 27-year career as a science teacher. He was the department head. He was my department head for a while. I ran into him at the Norfolk County Fair. To me, this is a teacher. He taught for 27 years and did not take one day off. No supply teachers for John Manson. In fact, we called him Tex Manson. If you were misbehaving in the class, he'd point at you like this. It was a little scary; he was a big guy from the prairies. Tex Manson didn't take a day off. I don't know what his thoughts would be as he would have seen, over 27 years, the rise in power of the unions in the school system. I should ask him what he thinks about that.

Now, we know this piece of legislation covers more than the teaching profession. It covers secretaries, educational assistants, a myriad of support staff. My staff recently had a call from a school board employee, a person making \$30,000 a year. She was a single mother, and she was finding it very tough—no pay increases in her job category. There's very little room to manoeuvre when you're making \$30,000 a year. So I hope there's a benefit here. I see that within this legislation—support staff unions, we know they do not have a central table, but they will have access to them under this Bill 122. The minister would have the authority to designate what's called a union bargaining council that represents support staff in the schools, like office staff, early childhood educators, maintenance personnel, as long as this council represents a minimum of 15 bargaining units. I hope that helps that woman who approached our office.

1610

As I see it, in this bill, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, we see an attempt to provide some clarity with respect to the roles of all sides in collective bargaining in the education sector. There were rounds of collective bargaining in 2005 and 2008. There was a voluntary framework established by this Ontario government in discussion with the school boards and the teacher unions.

Back during the Bill 115 process, the government, from my perspective, ignored the previous methods for collective bargaining and instead attempted to negotiate a memorandum of understanding with the unions. We know that the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, OECTA, was the first to sign on with this MOU and put pressure on other unions to sign.

We also know, when we think back, that the unions were not only upset about the contents of Bill 115. That bill—I know one of the members in the third party reminded us—was called the Putting Students First Act.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Ha.

Mr. Toby Barrett: There was a little bit of a chuckle on that one—somewhat disingenuous. But we know that the unions were disappointed with the government—maybe I'm downplaying that—that the government would insert itself in negotiations directly. School boards were also upset, as we know, because as the education

employers, they were really left out in the dark with this agreement of the government and the unions. The school boards had to implement the outcome that was negotiated, but they had very little leeway. The collective bargaining process coming out of Bill 115 was felt to be dysfunctional, and now here we are today and the government is seeking to make amends with those unions with this latest round of legislation.

Thinking back, what happened with Bill 115? The summer before last, this government was probably told by somebody to get their spending under control. I don't think they were listening to us at the time. Otherwise, it would compromise public education. It compromises kids in the classroom, health care and just about everything else worth funding with taxpayers' dollars. That's when they came forward with this MOU with the English Catholic teachers' association.

As opposition—I know we returned early to this Legislature the summer before last—we supported the need for austerity reflected in that bill, Bill 115. We had concerns with Bill 115. A full, true, broader public sector wage freeze is what we were calling for. Very simply, it means that you freeze wages; you don't allow for grid movement. That's what Bill 115 allowed.

As a result, there was something like \$450 million tacked on to the spending by the province as a result of that grid movement. There were some offsets, and—credit where credit is due—the offsets were agreed to by OECTA. It came in at something like \$150 million. The problem was that there still was that \$300-million gap, \$300 million that would be spent over and above the so-called wage freeze. It really wasn't a wage freeze. This is so important when you're talking about the fact that we're staring down the barrel of a \$30.2-billion deficit four years from now. So \$300 million is significant; that helps out. It helps out, but the gap remained.

Even more of concern, from what we've seen in the recent fall economic statement—we know from that statement that today Ontario is in trouble. Not only is the provincial economy weaker than expected, but the Ontario government now seems to have given up completely on preventing wasteful spending and any thought of reducing the deficit and the debt.

In contrast, two summers ago with Bill 115, we saw a glimmer of hope that this government, after 10 years of doubling the debt—and I'm tempted to use the expression "Dalton the debt-doubler"; I put most of the blame on him.

Mr. Bill Walker: Kathleen's followed right along.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I guess it goes on. We know that the legacy continues with the present government.

Just to wrap up, Speaker, Bill 115 has spawned Bill 122. I'm sure we'll be up here again a year or two down the road talking about another one.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm happy to make some comments on the member for Haldimand-Norfolk—

Interjection: Be nice.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:—and I'll be nice.

He had talked at length about Bill 115. A lot of us are going to mention that bill because I think relationships were frayed, as someone mentioned earlier, in the education system because of the introduction of Bill 115. I know the member from Kitchener–Waterloo is going to speak very shortly. I know she's going to speak very passionately about Bill 115 because that was a very contentious issue in Kitchener–Waterloo.

The good people of Kitchener–Waterloo elected a New Democrat. They sent a very clear message that they wanted to make sure that we fought hard and made sure that we had a voice at the table in this Legislature with regard to Bill 115, that it was a wrong-minded bill. Yet this government still pushed forward with it with the help of the Conservatives.

Now we're here today with Bill 122. It looks like the government wants to repair some of these wrongdoings, and in some ways, yes, stakeholders are supporting this bill. I think they do want to see it go to second reading and I think they want to have their voice at the table and be heard.

The other thing he mentioned, which was kind of interesting, was about how two young girls in grade 6 helped him learn to read. I wonder if those young girls went on to be teachers, because at that time—and I know now today that teachers just don't go for the money, that they get lured for compensation, like you had mentioned. I think teachers have a calling when they enter that profession. They want to work with children, they want to help children excel in their lives and they want to pass on knowledge. I think that's why teachers enter the workforce of education.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me to speak and comment on the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. I had the chance to speak about this important bill I believe a week before community week, and I highlighted the work that the Ministry of Labour has been able to do, along with the Ministry of Education, in the completion or drafting of this bill.

I think we should collectively be very proud of all the achievements we have made in our education system over the last 10 years. Our education system in Ontario today is recognized around the world in terms of student achievement, in terms of the gaps that we have been able to narrow among students. In fact, now our education system is top five in the English-speaking world, and it is in large part because of the investments this government has made in our education system, but also because of the hard work of our teachers and education workers. It's been a great partnership in making sure that children, their education, their well-being and upbringing are front and centre. The full-day kindergarten program alone is a tremendous success, providing great new opportunities for our four- and five-year-olds as they prepare for grade 1 and beyond.

But part and parcel of making sure that we have a good education system is making sure that our system works well in terms of the people who work within the system. That's what defines our education system. That's why having a model around collective bargaining, as proposed in this legislation, is important. I think we have come to that evolution in this province, especially with the work that has been done over the last 10 years. The work we have done with our education partners through federations and unions has really developed a good agreement and understanding around what the collective bargaining process should be, and I really encourage all members to support what's outlined in this bill.

1620

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to follow my colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk, who has served his people for many years in this House and does a great job.

Speaker, what I think I heard him say here that resounded very strongly is that there's really nothing in this bill about students or pupils. There's really no reference to who we should be serving here. I've been out speaking. I was in Ms. Cunningham's grade 10 class a couple of weeks ago at Peninsula Shores District School, my old school. I've been at the Georgian College police foundations. This Friday I'm going to Holland–Chatsworth community school.

At the end of the day, none of those students, none of those discussions ever centre around this type of legislation. What they want to know is the programs they're going to get, the type of education, the types of things they're going to look forward to as they go through the school system. I think it really strikes to this that we're talking about collective agreements. Although my colleague didn't say this, another colleague of mine, from Leeds–Grenville, I think, called this the “kiss and make up bill.” That's exactly what it is. It's trying to mend fences with those union leadership bosses that they, whether inadvertently or purposely, tried to go to battle with over Bill 115.

Our party did support Bill 115, because what we were suggesting then and we continue to suggest now is that we need an across-the-board wage freeze. We're in dire economic straits here. The consequences, if we don't turn this around, are going to mostly impact our youth and the opportunities that they have for educational opportunities down the road, so we continue to push.

I want to reference Tex Manson, a teacher for 27 years who taught our colleague. He didn't take one sick day off. It's obvious that our colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk, affectionately known as “the duke,” must have learned some lessons there, because I can sincerely say that he never misses a day at work. He's always working for the constituents that put him in this seat. That's why he continues, year after year after year, because they know they've got someone who listens, who brings their message to Queen's Park and who will stand up for their needs and their austerity needs, and wants to turn this

province around so that education, at the end of the day, is all about kids and the future that they have and the hope that they'll bring to their schools.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently, as I always do, to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. We have known each other for a long time. Certainly he predates me in this wonderful institution, but I've known him for the last 12 years. Generally I find him to be quite a balanced individual. When he speaks he doesn't get on with all the right-wing rhetoric that I often hear from some of his colleagues, including austerity needs, which I just heard from one of his colleagues. I have no idea what an austerity need is, but I'm hoping I might be edified later on.

But there were a couple of things that did concern me in the member from Haldimand–Norfolk's speech. The first one: He commented on union leaders that are out there trying to seek compensation for their members. Now, I do admit that that's part of their job. I do admit that when you're collective bargaining, you try to get better wages and conditions and health standards and any number of things for your members. It's part of what being in a union is all about. But I do take some umbrage and some concern when he said that the union leaders are not concerned about teaching and about teaching children. That has never been my experience when I talk to them. That job is all about the kids. If you take that job, if you go to teachers' college, you learn to be sympathetic and simpatico with the kids. The union leaders are no different. Those union leaders were all trained teachers before they may have started to do other things within the job profession, but I think they are absolutely committed to the teaching profession.

He said, too, that teachers get two months off with pay in July and August. The only reason they get that, in my understanding—and he may want to comment on that—is that they agree to take less money during the other 10 months so that they get 12 months' pay. But they can take all their money 10 months and then be on unemployment for two months, but most of them choose not to do that.

I'm hoping the member from Haldimand–Norfolk might comment on those things because they are somewhat disturbing to me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time that we have for questions and comments. I now go back to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk for his reply.

Mr. Toby Barrett: The member for London–Fanshawe: I agree. Teachers and teaching is a calling. The two grade 6 girls that taught me how to read—Elizabeth Dörner; she lives on the farm next door. I ran into Betty Pursley at our school reunion. The school had been closed for maybe 40 years or 35 years, but I don't think she's a teacher.

I do acknowledge that this bill, in contrast to Bill 115, does seem to stress government's responsibility to con-

sult and negotiate with the teacher union leaders around collective bargaining and compensation. I'm pleased that the Minister of Labour made a few remarks about collective bargaining, as did the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. It suggests to me that this is a labour bill; I don't see this as an education bill. The education minister used the word “students” four times in her opening lead.

The member from Beaches–East York, always diplomatic—has that skill—raised the issue of austerity. Our economy—we are in an austere time right now; we are in a time of austerity. When you're in a time of austerity—so many people are not working in my riding—it is incumbent on government to consider bringing in a budget that recognizes that austerity.

I'll wrap up there. I appreciate the feedback, and I'm looking forward to some more discussion on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure for me to stand up and speak to Bill 122, which is called the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. It's interesting for me, because we are here for a number of reasons, and the history and context are actually quite important.

Just on the title of the bill, this could conceivably be called, from the Liberal side of the House to their education partners, “We know our education partners don't trust us anymore, and we know that we can't be trusted, so we're going to bring in this piece of legislation to make sure that all the rules are clear and all the players know their places,” so that maybe—maybe—we'll forget about Bill 115. Maybe, but I don't think that's going to happen.

I'm going to talk about why this piece of legislation is important, just in case you don't know, because I know that this side of the House does not know.

So the context: In the mid-1990s, under former Premier Harris, school boards lost their ability to raise taxes—to levy taxes. At the same time, \$2 billion was removed from school boards across the province, devastating school boards, compromising democracy, undermining local school boards and their responsibilities, forcing the amalgamation of school boards—a very painful process.

Some of you have been here long enough to remember the people outside on the front lawn and lying on the stairs in the main hallway, fighting for local democracy and sustainable funding for public education. I know this time quite well, because that was actually when I sort of woke up to the politics of education in the province of Ontario, and in particular, the cuts to adult education at the time. Certainly, I don't know how you think we're ever going to address child poverty in the province of Ontario in a very responsible way when you sort of disenfranchise and marginalize adults who are seeking to benefit their lives through public education.

But Mr. Harris saw it differently—the PCs at the time saw it differently—and \$2 billion was pulled out of public education. It was well documented through the Rozanski report at the time. I think, and it would be safe

to say, that those teachers and those front-line workers who have been disparaged in previous comments will continue to this day to see that systemic operational deficit that was begun under that regime and continued on.

Then 2003 happened, and the Liberals were elected. The promises of a new day were in all the media. Actually, I would say there was a sense of hope and optimism a little bit. I know it well, because I was elected to the Waterloo Region District School Board as a trustee in 2003, and it was a great day. But there were certainly a lot of promises that had been made to rectify and to do damage control from the previous Harris regime, and clearly some of those promises could not be fulfilled, which in turn became the theme of this government's legacy.

1630

Following that, though, we did see increased centralized policy development and the withdrawal of power from local school boards to here at Queen's Park. Quite honestly, school boards, over the years, have seen this diminishment of power and the ability to actually meet their responsibilities. I think a lot of people in this House might not know that school boards have a mandated responsibility not only for academics and the financial component that is associated with that, making sure that students are successful—that's mandated by this government; they also have a mandated responsibility for well-being, which, of course, some people can't measure. It's a hard thing to measure, but there it is. Not only are school boards responsible for test scores and the standardized testing mantra, but they certainly have the responsibility for well-being.

I know that many of you, regardless of where you come from, will understand that what is happening in our schools day in and day out on the mental health piece is shocking. School boards are actually reeling with the effect of having to deal with the social, emotional, nutritional and physical needs of students.

We saw this centralized system of power that the Liberals brought in, a very neo-Liberal agenda that was somewhat patronizing to school boards: "You do a good job. We'll tell you what to do. We're not going to give you the resources to do it, but we're going to give you the mandate to do it, and then we're going to punish you if you don't do it properly, as we see fit." This is not a healthy relationship.

At the same time, the whole negotiations process was playing itself out. In the first round of negotiations, things went pretty well because there was money on the table. The second round, they were a little bit more testy. At the time, the now Premier was the Minister of Education, and everybody sort of calmed down because there was still some money. That actually makes a difference in negotiations. Money does make a difference in negotiations, in collective bargaining, and that made a difference to school boards.

This leaves us with Bill 115 in the summer of 2012, when negotiations were not going so well because there

was no money. Zero and zero were on the table. The unions were amenable to the zero and zero, but you would be surprised that they were also fighting about some of that systemic underfunding that was happening at the school boards, like special education, like some of the course restrictions that have been placed on school boards, because, as was promised by the Liberals, the funding formula was supposed to be reviewed in its entirety: not little bits and pieces of it, but in its entirety because, as school boards lose their enrolment because people are having fewer children in particular, the rural boards and the northern boards were even further disenfranchised, because enrolment drives funding.

This became part of those negotiations and that discussion during the Bill 115 round tables. Of course it wasn't going well because the government was not interested in that. "No, no, we don't want to hear about that," they said. "We don't want to hear about those special education issues that are emerging. We don't want to hear about the ongoing transportation issues." Some school boards had, in previous years, found efficiencies. They had done their due diligence. They had found efficiencies and had good working relationships with some of the small bus operators. Then this new transportation model came in and they were flatlined, so they were actually punished for being efficient. It's really quite something. You really can't even make this stuff up; you really can't.

Bill 115 came in for a lot of reasons. I think some of my colleagues have already been very clear about the politics of Bill 115, but I just want to say for the record, as someone who was directly affected during the debates and during the canvassing, knocking on the doors and meeting with concerned constituents over the direction of public education during the by-election, which is why I'm standing here, those concerns rippled out into the entire community because education is a core value of our communities. Whether or not people have children in the system, whether or not they have family or friends who work in the system, it dismantled the trust that existed in previous years. People were, quite honestly, for a lack of a better word, discombobulated by it, because they didn't see how picking a fight with education workers was going to strengthen public education. They didn't understand, because the collective bargaining process had not been allowed to play itself out.

Not even Mike Harris would have gone that far. He would never have imposed a contract, knowing full well that it was in contravention with the Ministry of Labour and with the Ontario Labour Relations Act. He would not have gone that far because, you know what? He would have known that it would cost taxpayers more money at the back end. He would have known that trying to circumvent collective bargaining in that way, in that manner, would not only hurt public education, but it would cost people more money down the line.

Those legal negotiations are still ongoing. Those cases are still before the Labour Relations Board, as they should be, because they were precedent-setting. No other government had ever done that, not even the PCs.

So you can see where there's a need—there's a genuine need—for this legislation to be in front of us today. The Liberals recognize that they have undermined trust within the education sector, and they're very eager to restart that relationship, to change the channel—we hear that sometimes. They want to change the channel on this issue.

But for us over here, we're more concerned that all the players at the table know their roles and responsibilities. Quite honestly, school boards have been fighting to get to that table. They've been fighting for legitimacy at that table, even though they are the employer.

So I think, if I was to be very honest about it, that I'm pleased that the government has finally realized that it's so important for all three parties to be at the table: the board, as the employer, having a valid spot at that table; employees and their bargaining agents, because they need to be part of that negotiation; and the funder, which is the Ministry of Education.

If everybody understands their roles, it should all go fine, right? It should be fine. But I guarantee you that Bill 122 is not going to be the be-all and end-all, because there are some long-standing systemic issues around the funding formula that have not been dealt with, not in 10 years.

While it will be important for everyone to know their roles and responsibilities, there are clearly some outstanding issues, as the legislation is presented to us, and I'm going to give you an example: the provision that allows the employer bargaining agency to be substituted in "if, in the minister's opinion," the employer bargaining agency "is unable or unwilling to ... perform those duties," so if the minister doesn't really like how things are going. In my mind, I call this the Laurel Broten clause, because things didn't go so well last time, and then the hammer came out.

I'm concerned about this, as we all are. I guess this is the part where the three wise men come in and take over the entire bargaining process. This is section 22, just for the record. I think we should all have some concerns about this, because if the objective is to build an open and transparent model of collective bargaining, then you can't have a clause that says, "Well, if it's not going our way, we get to bring in new players." That undermines the entire process.

Also, the process or the provision that the bargaining agents "shall co-operate in good faith with the crown in preparing for and conducting central bargaining"—I guess this all comes down to, what is good faith? If we had faith that the government understood what good-faith bargaining was, then we would all be on the same page. But there isn't.

So these are two major issues that I think need to be addressed.

This whole business about co-operating in good faith with the crown sort of reminds me of *Game of Thrones*. I guess this is the *Game of Thrones* clause: If things aren't going so well, then we get to change the rules. That

pretty much undermines the entire goal of Bill 122. I hope we can all agree with that.

1640

This piece of legislation, if passed—and I think that we will cautiously be supporting it; as I've said, we have some serious concerns about it—will change the collective bargaining framework in two main ways.

It will formalize a proactive process of central and local bargaining. I think that there's definitely going to be some tension between the central bargaining and the local bargaining because, quite honestly, school boards know their students best. They have this mandate for academic achievement, and they have this mandate for student well-being. They know their students best. I think that if they were quite honestly redefining Bill 115, Putting Students First, then that piece of legislation would have looked really different, because school boards put their students first, and they end up fighting with the Ministry of Education, which is trying to redefine the reality of education for students in the province of Ontario.

We even heard this morning of the Niagara board. This is a long-standing, systemic operational deficit. It's a structural deficit for special education. Bill 122 is not going to fix that unless, somehow, the Ministry of Education actually does what it said it was always going to do, which is to have another look at the funding model and review the funding model to address some of those disparities and inequities that are systemic across the province. Northern boards do not have the enrolment to generate the same sort of programming that you would have in high-growth areas. The rural boards, for sure, with all the forced amalgamations that they've had to adopt, are also struggling for resources on the ground.

The formalization of this proactive process—I'll give you full credit for bringing it in. It's a little late, but at least it's here now.

Providing a central grievance arbitration system: I think that this actually is probably long overdue, and I think that you will see a number of grievances come through, because at the end of the day, it will be about funding. As I've said, without fixing the funding formula, except for bits and pieces, you're going to see some long-standing issues come to the bargaining table. That may take our collective efforts to try to deal with some of that.

The PCs so far have demonstrated, on several levels, that union bashing is the way to go and that it's—I just think it's old. It doesn't help. It doesn't build confidence in the public education system. You've said that peace and stability essentially don't matter. It does matter. It matters because we've seen how Bill 115 disrupted the public education system last year. In fact, there's still a shakiness in there.

You know, having barely survived the \$2-billion removal during the Mike Harris years and having adapted, in many regards, to the neo-liberal agenda of "father knows best" for public education, I think it is time for us to recognize that school boards should be equal partners in the collective bargaining process, and they should ac-

tually be respected partners in public education. One of the ways to do that is actually to listen to them and pay attention to some of the issues that they bring to the fore, because they're not just specific issues; these are central issues around transportation, around special ed, around mental health.

Quite honestly, to hear the PCs talk about a lack of economic progress in this province—I mean, there's no doubt that is an issue, but that's because these issues distract us away from the conversation around 21st-century learning skills, and what employers need, and the skills gap and productivity. Education connects all of it.

Every day, parents across this province send their children off into the local school and—you know, you have to be honest about this—a little part of their heart goes with them. It's a huge trust to send your child off to the public education system, and it's a trust that should be honoured not only in this place—so disparaging those education workers is not a good use of your time or of your energy.

For school boards themselves, having now had this weight of increased responsibility around student achievement and around well-being, it's time for them to be honoured at the bargaining table, their voices listened to, because they are on the front lines and they care and have the responsibility for student achievement.

We will be giving a very cautious support to Bill 122. We hope that some of the concerns that we've raised resonate with the government. We hope that, perhaps one day, the Progressive Conservative Party will realize that disparaging the people who work in the education system is not a productive way to strengthen public education, and that peace and stability and having a transparent method for collective bargaining to be negotiated is actually a good use of our time. In fact, it's a proactive way for us to stay focused on the real issues in public education. Certainly, that trust should not be ignored.

Just one final thing: In the Kitchener–Waterloo by-election, education was recognized as a core value of that community. I would argue that it's a core value of every community in the province. I think that if we, collectively, could come together and recognize that the people who work in that system are actually valued members of society and valued members of the workforce, because they are creating the future generations, then we actually could focus on some of the real things that need our attention and are very much connected to the economy.

Just as a final note, I'm glad that there's going to be some clarity around rules and responsibilities during the collective bargaining process. It's long overdue. As I said, we will be giving our cautious support to this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise again to speak in support of Bill 122. I want to respond to some of the comments made by my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo. Those of us who have lived long enough have experienced the Rae days and the Harris days, and she commented about Bill 115. So let me remind the mem-

bers opposite, having grown up with the Toronto Board of Education back in the 1970s, we went through forced Rae days—forced Rae days—when I was a trustee at that time, when my nieces and nephew were forced to have days off. Now, what kids do you know that don't know about days off? That was a concern. Under the Harris government, we fired teachers, we closed schools; again, that was a concern.

Learning from past experience, we know that this proposed Bill 122 will address some of the central bargaining issues. Like the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, I was a trustee, for the Toronto District School Board. This proposed legislation, if passed, will bring all the parties to the table. This is not anything new. Right now, we have central bargaining for doctors, for nurses and other health professionals across the system—so, by bringing the parties together, one time only, to have those conversations, in particular when it comes to wages and central issues that the member commented on earlier.

The other piece here is that it also respects local issues as well. If this legislation is passed, there will be two-tier bargaining: one centrally, one locally. Some of the local issues are very distinct for the urban school board that I'm from, from downtown Toronto, but also other areas that are very rural and very unique to those communities.

With regard to this bill, there is time sensitivity. I'm urging all members to remind themselves that we need to move this process through, finish second reading, and go to committee as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide a couple of minutes of questions and comments to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for her speech. It was quite a speech. In some cases, it almost reminded me of a leadership style speech, very rousing. She took a shot at all the different parties. But, you know, I do respect her knowledge of school boards and her experience as a trustee, as the previous speaker, the member for Scarborough–Agincourt, was also a former trustee. I never served as a trustee before I was elected an MPP, so I don't bring that perspective, so I like to hear from folks in the education sector who were on the front line.

I like to listen to their life experiences. Certainly the member brings to her job as an MPP that experience of when she first became a school trustee in 2003. I listened very carefully to some of her comments, especially about section 22 of Bill 122. I know that I'll be going back and speaking to some of my local people about that particular section and what they feel, whether positive or negative. That section would affect local boards.

1650

I do want to, just in the last few seconds of my speech, address a comment that she made about rhetoric and about going after people in the education sector. I had a 20-minute rotation. I don't take on anyone in the education sector. In fact, I like going into the education sector and listening to people. Whether it's education or health care, I don't mind talking to front-line workers. I may not

always agree with them, and sometimes I don't, but I'll tell you, when the people picketed on Bill 115 in front of my office, I gave them hot chocolate. I respected their right to protest my opinion and to not agree with me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a privilege for me to be in the House when the member from Kitchener–Waterloo speaks, particularly to this bill, because when I found out that she was actually going to be a candidate in that by-election and I knew the field that she was coming from, I wholeheartedly made myself available to her. When I knocked on those doors, I knew that she was connected with the individuals in her communities, because a lot of what I heard on the doorsteps was on that experience that she was bringing in. That new light was going to be a huge, huge benefit to our caucus.

I just wanted to highlight a couple of the points that she brought up. First she talked about the history of what led us to having this discussion in regard to the school boards' role being minimized in the last round of negotiations, and also local democracy being removed from those individuals, minimizing their roles and really ignoring the fact that these boards had come up with discussions in regard to where savings could be found. A lot of those issues were totally disregarded. Again, she used the analogy where, "Big Brother knows best. We're going to do it this way and ignore a lot of the work that you have done." It really undermined the entire process of sitting down and negotiating with employers, the government being the employer in this issue.

The one point that she really brought up that I wanted to highlight was that the local school boards know best. They know what the kids are asking for. They know their needs. They identify with it. I've sat down at many negotiations, and it was such a struggle for me when I was negotiating with individuals who were not from those areas, who were not from those communities and were not from the province. It really caused problems. When you're looking at local autonomy and when you're looking at individualized service and their needs, no one knows better than the actual people who are serving those kids.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Joe Dickson: It's a pleasure to stand and speak in reference to Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. I speak as the member for Ajax–Pickering, not a past Catholic school trustee, where we had a very small area. This, of course, would be prior to regionalization, but the process was always a topic of conversation, no matter what generation you spoke to it in. I can tell you that this started to become a little bit more of a challenge throughout the 1970s, once regionalization was completed.

I was speaking somewhere on Saturday evening, east of Ajax, and I was approached by a teaching professional who was complaining about the process. I said, "There is activity in the Legislature on that, and we'll just have to

wait and see how that formalizes itself in its final position." When we formalize, whether it's legislation or a combination of legislation and regulations, we're going to do something that is in fact solving a problem for the long term. We don't want to see the gains made by the teaching profession lost because of arbitrary measures and ill will throughout the process. I can tell you that I believe this bill does that in its entirety. It will solve the problems in the long term and make it more viable for us and for all of the teaching professionals in this province who do such a great job, day in, day out. It just never stops. I congratulate them, and I'll certainly work with anyone on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's it for questions and comments. I return to the member for Kitchener–Waterloo for her response.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you to the members from Scarborough–Agincourt, Leeds–Grenville, Algoma–Manitoulin and Ajax–Pickering for their feedback.

I recognize that we see this issue quite differently. I do want to say that the Minister of Education was the past president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, as was I. I think that it's a really good step to have someone who has actually had the chance to travel across the province and talk to the education sector, from the north to the east, south and west. I think there's an acknowledgment there that there is some disparity in access to education. Stabilizing and strengthening the process by which we negotiate contracts is a good step.

That said, the concerns that we've had—I've already articulated them. There is a trust issue around what the Ministry of Education feels is important and what school boards feel are important issues. Any measure that we can put in place which actually raises the level of respect for those local voices would go a long way to ensuring that any bargaining in the future has some integrity, has some dignity and is respectful of those local voices. So I just want to put that on the table.

Every government has had their challenges with education, and I definitely think that it's a hill worth dying on. It underpins our democracy as a province. It's worth fighting for, each and every day. If we can get to a respectful place where people in our schools understand that they are part of the broader vision for this province, then that would be a good direction to go in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for further debate, I will announce to the House the following:

Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and one-half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader or another member of the executive council specifies otherwise.

I recognize the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, we'd like the debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Bill Walker: To the minister, thank you for allowing me my 20 minutes on behalf of my constituents in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, although my colleague from Leeds-Grenville might have had a better title, and that's the kiss-and-make-up bill.

This bill is aimed at correcting the problems with Bill 115, and part of that is because it was poorly executed. I've had a number of people in my riding, most of them actually Liberals and many from the teaching profession, come and say, "Why would they have alienated their biggest allies: union management? Why would they have gone down this path?" Now we're back here talking about it again.

The bill clarifies the government's role, and that is one where they should consult and negotiate. Mr. Speaker, this is yet again a situation where we don't need administration. We shouldn't have to have this in legislation and regulation. What this should be is an absolute, expected approach from day one on anything we're talking about. You should always have the courtesy to respect the stakeholders who are going to be impacted the most: those on the front lines—in this case the parents and the students who, in my mind, were totally shut out of how this was rolled out in the first place.

It's unfortunate, but it again focuses the spotlight on how this government, in my tenure here and certainly for many years prior to me getting here, has approached this. They're just steamrolling.

The horse racing industry is one of those. They came out and said, "You shall do this." They didn't consult, and now they're trying to come back and look like the heroes who are going to rejuvenate that whole industry. They've already done the damage. It's going to be tough to bring that back.

1700

The Green Energy Act—again, taking democracy from local communities, locally elected officials, who have no say in whether wind turbines will go in their communities or not.

Physiotherapy programs: They again came in and said, "You shall; we're going to pull these." There was no consultation with the physiotherapists to ensure that this was going to be a good, effective use and a change.

Cataract surgery, insulin strips, all of those types of things: This government continues to go in, they decimate it and then they try to come back and look like the champion and the hero.

It's just not working well for the people of Ontario, and it saddens me that I continually have to rise in my role as government opposition to point out the error of their ways. But that is my job, and on behalf of the residents who are not getting the services because of this mismanagement and the way they're trying to steamroll things in our province, I will continue to do that. I will not apologize for that. We need to ensure that we hold

them to account at every step of the way, and I will continue to do that.

It was not lost on me as well—and my colleague from Leeds-Grenville also mentioned in his 20-minute presentation—that they've increased spending in the education sector by \$8.5 billion. There are 250,000—a quarter of a million—fewer students in the system, yet they've increased spending, and I'm not certain that the outcome is better today than it used to be.

This bill ignores two very, very important stakeholders in the education system: the parents of children who are in the system, and the children themselves. My colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk very elaborately and eloquently, in his 20-minute discussion, pointed out that there's almost no reference to children, outcomes, improved education in this bill. This is all about collective bargaining and negotiation.

If this had been done better, we wouldn't be talking about this. It suggests to me that—the people who called me, even when we were debating Bill 115 the first time, were wanting to see things that were going to help their students, that were going to ensure that their students got the best possible education to be able to fend for themselves and strive and excel in our new economy. They were worried. In fact, they used words like, "They were using them as bargaining chips"—not only the parents but the children were used as bargaining chips. It created strife; it created confusion. All throughout their lifestyle, everyday tasks became a challenge because they didn't know: Were they going on strike? Weren't they going on strike? "What's this going to do to my personal life?" At the end of the day, it was all for nothing.

As the PCs, right at the very outset, we had said to put in an across-the-board wage freeze for all of the public sector, facing the debt and deficit that this government has run up, and we wouldn't have had that whole strife and concern and confusion that we had. We said we wanted an across-the-board wage freeze, and it still isn't there. We could have saved \$2 billion.

Bill 122 is just a more benign version of Bill 115 and is very, very technical. It's talking about a whole bunch of collective agreeing; it's not talking about kids and education.

When I go out to schools—I go out often. I was out to Mrs. Cunningham's class a couple of times at the Peninsula Shores District School, my old high school. I really commend her, because she's allowing us in to have an open discussion with the students. I was just last week at Georgian College police foundations, and then this Friday I'll be at Holland-Chatworth community school. Not once in our discussions have we talked about things like collective bargaining and Bill 115 or Bill 122. What we talk about, what those students really want to talk about, is the closure of schools.

We've had two accommodation reviews going on in our jurisdiction, and it saddens me again that all of those parents have to come and put their lives on hold to try to save that school, the very fabric of a rural community, to ensure that their children will get the exact same level of

education—or better, perhaps—that they were able to receive in those rural schools.

Why aren't we in here debating why we're using the same old funding formula? We all know that classroom size and student enrolment are declining, and yet we continue to fund based on that old, archaic model. Why aren't we disputing that? Why aren't we debating that and trying to find innovative ways to do those types of things?

They're talking to me about a lack of programs and a lack of resources in the actual schools they sit in. They're talking about the school funding formula and what the program services are that they're going to need, going forward.

Why aren't we talking about things like how do we strive to have better apprenticeship programs, rather than the very stifling trades tax that the Liberal government has recently imposed and which will do more negative damage to those students who want to come into the trades? We already know it's a looming crisis out there, but we spend time arguing on these types of things.

This all boils down to common themes. If the Liberals hadn't allowed our province—not "allowed," they actually drove the bus. They drove the bus and doubled the debt. The deficit is out of whack and it continues to go up, even though—in their most recent economic fall statement, they've now projected that even by 2017-20, by which they swore they would have a balanced budget—now they're pushing it out because they know that they're addicted to spending and they have no ability to pull back from there. What we know is that if they hadn't gotten us into this mess, if they wouldn't continue to go down this path, we would actually be in a place where we'd be talking about the good things in education, what new programs, what innovative programs we should be implementing, the types of things we can do remotely and with virtual distance.

We spent two legislative sessions talking and discussing education financing rather than what we should be talking about, and that is the value of education, where education needs to be, so that those young people who are sitting in front of you and at the back, our brand new pages this week here—we should be talking and always focusing on those young children and what their future is going to be, and it scares me where we are.

If we were in a stable financial state, we would be discussing these new initiatives. We'd be discussing the hope and the opportunities that our students are going to hold in the future rather than actually sitting in this House wondering, what's their future going to be? Are we going to be able to actually have the school system that we all take for granted to some degree? We have a great school system, and we always have, but it can be so much better. We shouldn't be talking about things that are only finance-driven; we should be talking about what's really there.

It brings me—and it's interesting. I sat here and listened intently to my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo, from the NDP. In her statement, she said that the Liberals

don't listen, and she cited a number of specific examples. She actually admitted that there's no money. That's a nice thing, that they finally admit it. We're \$12 billion in debt again this year. I can't fathom at times how they can say this every day and find all the faults, but when it comes to crucial votes like the budget, they support this Liberal government and give them life. They extend their life. They prop them up.

They're critical on just about everything that the Liberals do, and yet when it comes to the budget, they either sat on their hands the first time around, or this time they actually stepped up and supported it. They're accomplices to what this government has done to our great province, and they can't deny that. They continue to prop them up.

We bring bills, as the official opposition, to try to put a moratorium, for example, on the Green Energy Act, so that we bring back democracy to our communities. And what do they do? They sanctimoniously stand up and prop them up at every opportunity. On every crucial vote that we've had in this House, when they've had the opportunity to actually stand up for the true people of Ontario, the taxpayers, the people paying the freight, they have voted with the government and allowed them to stay in power. That is something that they will have to look in the mirror every day about and make their own rationale to their constituents of why they can do that.

Again, I'm going to be very specific to the former speaker from Kitchener–Waterloo. She references Mike Harris all the time, and in her closing remarks she made some comments about old thinking. She made comments about being respectful. Why do we have to keep going back to Mike Harris? If we're really here about collaboration and working together, why can't we work collaboratively to move forward?

Ms. Catherine Fife: He cut \$2 billion out of education. Do you know how hard it is to recover from—

Mr. Bill Walker: She talked about \$2 billion, and she's heckling me right now on the \$2 billion.

It's interesting that the Liberals have wasted \$1.1 billion on two gas plants, and yet I believe they supported the same government who did that. They gave them an extension of life, knowing full well what that was going to be. They continue to stand here in this House every day and talk about how terrible the government is. They talk about how they mismanage funds. They talk about the wasteful spending, and yet when it comes to those critical votes, they stand in unison with their hands together, saying, "We will give you more extended life." They have to stand up and look in the mirror. Every day they have to go back and explain to themselves, first and foremost, how we can prop up that government that apparently is so spiteful.

But I don't want to just lose this. She made a comment that Mike Harris would never have imposed such measures, and yet she and her party continue to vote and support and prop up these Liberals. You can't have it both ways, and it's high time that the media in this province picked up on that as well. There's a free ride being given

to some people in this House. They can come up and say all that every time. They can be very sanctimonious about the government across the floor, but they continue to step up and support them at every opportunity.

Again in this bill, all we're doing is rehashing a misstep by that government. They imposed certain things and created a whole lot of bedlam in our province for a lot of people, and at the end of the day, they're still in power. They were abetted by the NDP in their voting procedures, and yet we're not talking about the things that, again, we should be talking about. We're not talking about how we're going to cut back spending so that these students have a chance at a future, so that we have the innovative programs, so that we have those improvisational programs. We should be the leading edge of the world—we are. We have the people. We have the ability. We have the innovative spirit right here in our own backyard in Ontario, but we're the laggards of the province because of the debt that that government has run us into. We spend most of our time in here talking about bills that are just fringe around the edge. They're tweaking around the edge rather than getting down to the fundamental issues.

1710

Ontario's two million students are not getting enough attention from this government when it comes down to what they really need; they're not nearly as much as the public sector unions are. This is, again, one of those ones—"We need to appease them, because, yes, some support went to the NDP in that last by-election." We know that and they know that. They know they had a lot of forces that jumped in their bandwagon for this time around. They're trying to build bridges and make up.

But, you know, at the end of the day, we're all sent here to govern on behalf of the entirety of the Ontario taxpayer. We need to all be working to ensure that the programs and services are the absolute best at the end of the day for the user, the students in this case, the people that we need to be ensuring and fostering hope and the ability to know that they're going to come out at the other end with a better lifestyle than what we had. That's what I came here to do, to ensure that when I come here every day and give my time and energy, it's so that there's a better future ahead, so we have a better opportunity for the kids in the room, for those out there listening, for the next generation that are going to come along and be our new leaders and our new workers. Right now, Speaker, that's a tough challenge with the way this government has driven us into the debt load that we have.

This morning, I met with CUPE individuals, and I asked them, "Do you know what our third-biggest expenditure in government is?" I asked them that question. You will know that, Mr. Speaker. You will know that health care is our number one expenditure of the Ontario government. You will know that number two is education, as it should be, as both of those should be. But outside of this room, I'm wondering how many people know what the answer to number three is.

Mr. Todd Smith: I know.

Mr. Bill Walker: What is it?

Mr. Todd Smith: Education.

Mr. Bill Walker: No, education was number two. It's interest on the debt payment: \$10 billion. Just think about the innovation that we could have, just think what we could have in our systems, in our health care system, in our educational system, in our social programs. In my new critic responsibility, children and youth, every day I hear concerns about the lack of resources out there for those most in need. It saddens me to say to those people, "You know what? We spend \$10 billion—that government has got us to a point where we're spending \$10 billion just to pay interest on our debt." What could that do for social housing? What could that do for those with disabilities, those with mental challenges?

There are so many people out there who are being left behind because of this government and their inability to manage our fiscal finances, and again, abetted by the NDP, who continue to prop them up and allow them to continue on down this nightmare path they're going on.

It's really very disheartening to be able to hear things that are going to make people get up in the morning and say, "You know what? We are in dire straits. We need to have some significant change." I'm not talking about cutting and slashing, because I know that's where that party is going to go and they're going to try to dredge up the past. What I'm talking about, Mr. Speaker, is that we need to be strategic in every dollar that we spend. We need to be looking at it as an investment that truly is going to be moving us forward. It's truly going to progress us. We need to do that not just in this act, but in all the acts.

I referenced earlier—the Green Energy Act is one of those ones, and I'm really getting more and more of an appreciation the longer I'm here, seeing the absolute critical role that energy plays in our province and in our country. We used to be the leaders. We used to be the leaders in North America. We had the lowest energy rates, and this province was booming. This province was the leader of the train. We were producing jobs. We were producing innovative opportunities. We had the BlackBerry's coming along. We had all kinds of companies coming out and starting up in Ontario, expanding in Ontario. And now, there's a mass exodus: 800,000 to a million people are out of work today. Our manufacturing industry has been decimated. And why wouldn't it be? When you've doubled and tripled the energy rates over the last eight years—we just had another increase on November 1—who would come to our province? Who's going to come and say, "Yes, I really want to see those"? And you add in the red tape and the bureaucracy and the number of regulations that this government imposes on them, and it just, again, is one of those ones where you start to say, "How much further can we go down?"

We're going to have, I believe, either in 2014 or 2015, the highest energy rates in North America. A big part of that is because they've tried to sell the goods to the public of Ontario that we are going to be the cleanest, greenest environmental economy in the world. Mr.

Speaker, I want to tell you that that's coming back in spades the opposite way. They're losing jobs 4 to 1, not gaining them 4 to 1. It's energy that we can't rely on, so we have to have the backup. We paid the United States and Quebec half a billion dollars—paid them. We didn't give the power away. We paid them half a billion dollars to make them doubly effective against our own manufacturing industries. So there's a lot of these things, and they just steamrolled.

My whole point here—because I'm sure someone is going to say, "Get back to the Education Act," so I'll jump ahead there a little bit. What this is all about is the fundamental premise of this bill, which really says that you should consult the stakeholders. You should be out having discussions and dialogue with those people at the front lines. That's absolutely critical. We should be doing that in every facet of everything we do. The people who are in the trenches are the people who know their business. They can consult us and tell us, "Here's what's needed; here's how you should roll this out," so that we're not always coming back and playing catch-up.

In this case, we've debated Bill 115, and now it's Bill 122. Our critic, Mr. Leone from Cambridge, has been very straight. He has reviewed this, and I think he is supportive, and we are generally supportive. There need to be some amendments, and one of the key amendments in there that I hear from my constituents in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, more so than anything about this bill and the former bill, is reg 274, and that is that the teacher who is the best to teach the job should be given the job, and the principal should have the ability to be able to choose the person who is best qualified, as opposed to how long you've been in a role or how long you've been in a union environment and your seniority comes to play.

Mr. Speaker, for my children—I have two boys: Zach, 19, and Ben, 16—I want them, in everything they do in the education sector, to have absolutely the best teacher that they have access to so that they can become the absolute best persons that they can as they come out and become productive members of our society.

Mr. Speaker, when there's legislation that says that that person has been in line longer so they're going to become the teacher, that just doesn't cut it, and I think the general populace out there would certainly support that that's an absolutely critical piece, that this legislation, in clause-by-clause, if it's going to go through, has to be amended to reflect the ability of the teacher, not the tenure of the teacher.

Overall, I would say that this talks about process. It talks about collective agreements. It talks about how we're going to fund and who can say and who gets to have the ability—a lot of talk in there. But what I really come back to and what I want to just really reinforce in my closing couple minutes is that every piece of legislation we bring to this House, particularly in education, should be talking about the students. Is it better value for them? Are they going to become better equipped? Are they going to be more knowledgeable at the end of the day? And are we changing the structure so that in a rural

place like Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, where we face two school closures of small, community-fabric schools—we should be talking about how we change that funding formula to ensure those schools remain and continue to be a vibrant part of our community, as opposed to just shutting them down and saying sorry about it.

We'll take out all of that mismanagement. Our \$1.1 billion in the gas plants—we'll pull that out of the education sector and those kids are going to suffer at the end of the day.

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Walker: So at the end of the day, they can heckle all they like, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't really matter. They're going—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Actually, it does matter, because if I can't hear you, then there's a problem. So I would ask the government members to please come to order and allow the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound to make his comments.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do, of course, respect that you do need to hear me, and this is very important for the people at home to be able to hear, because that's our job: to bring critical concerns to the Legislature so we can make sure we have the best legislation at the end of the day.

I will continue to always bring up the mismanagement that they have and the people who are suffering, the people like the kids, at the end of the day; those schools, if they were to have closed—what that would have done to our rural economy and the fabric of our communities. I will talk about the \$1.1 billion wasted on those gas plants and the health care services we're not having—the hip replacements and the cancer assessments that we're not getting. I'll talk about the educational programs that we're not getting; and apprenticeship programs, which we're crying for. Many kids in rural Ontario want to take apprenticeships because they actually can then be part of a viable economy going forward.

I really wish we would be talking about those types of issues rather than something that's about collective bargaining that they mismanaged from the get-go, and now we've got to come back. They'll try to come out looking like heroes. At the end of the day, the people of Ontario are too smart for that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You know, it's so hard to sometimes control your temper in this place, but I'm going to try, because what I've just heard is such revisionism on behalf of education. I only mentioned Mike Harris because he started—the member talks about apprenticeships. Mike Harris removed the industrial sector from our schools—the shops. Today, in some of our schools in this province of Ontario, you cannot even cut a carrot in a school, and yet we have, of course, this healthy food policy.

I understand. I did say, of course, that the Liberals have not been great listeners, but the PCs have not been good readers. They have not read a budget for two years

before they said no to it. We like to say on this side of the House that readers are leaders. And it's topical, because we are talking about education. Yet they were very happy, the PCs, to get into bed with the Liberals for the right price. When EllisDon was on the table, they jumped right in.

So I think that the reality in this House is that people need to acknowledge that minority governments are the reality in the province of Ontario, and they don't want to believe that because they don't want to hear that nobody in this province trusts that party to do the right thing. Nobody. There is no trust whatsoever. When you talk about public services and education, nobody believes that if you were even to win—which surely cannot happen—you would do the right thing for health care, you would do the right thing for education, because this province is still reeling from the cuts from 10 years ago. There is no trust in this province for that party.

1720

This piece of legislation needs to come into place because we need to rebuild trust in the education sector. Peace and stability do matter. Collective agreements do matter. Let's get it done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I listened carefully to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, and I was pleased to try to facilitate his chance to speak. I just listened to the wonderful comments from the member from Kitchener-Waterloo. I think she clearly gets it. I appreciate her words.

One of my heroes, Bobby Kennedy, used to say, "Good judgment is based on experience, and experience invariably on bad judgment." In other words, my mom would say, "Learn from your mistakes."

As the member from Bruce-Grey talks about how all these folk on the government side want to do is build bridges and relationships and fess up and make up, well, you know what? There's nothing wrong with that. Along the journey, if you trip up, you need to revisit what you're doing and try to come up with a better answer.

You talk about picking on Mike Harris and you lifted him up as an example of being respectful. I want to tell you, maybe you've never studied any history of this place or some of the decisions made, but when I was mayor of the town of Flamborough, you sure as heck weren't respectful when you forced the amalgamation on us or on other places as well. No respect there. You weren't respectful when Mike Harris called nurses over-trained hula hoop workers. You weren't respectful when thousands of teachers were lining up and signing up for early retirement because you had been so disrespectful. Do you remember the clock ad that was run by the then Tories when they were in government? Disrespectful in the extreme. And you know what? You paid a price for it, and that's why you're on that side of the House. Thank God.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I am pleased to join the discussion this afternoon and pay respect to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and his attempt to bring some sort of accountability to the whole discussion on Bill 122. I think our position is fairly clear, but what isn't clear is much of the understanding of the past here.

I was first elected as a school trustee I think it was in 1980 or 1982. I served a couple of terms. I was on the provincial board. My wife is now a former—retired—teacher and now a school trustee. Members of my family, quite a few of them, are teachers.

The history of this is important. The school boards themselves today were formed by the Sweeney commission. The Sweeney commission—he was a well-respected Liberal—was formed by David Cooke, who was the Minister of Education under the NDP government. All of the changes and reforms in education happened under the NDP; Dave Cooke was the minister. It was called the Royal Commission on Learning—it was called For the Love of Learning, and this is a document with about 130 recommendations, where they created the College of Teachers. They created the new curriculum and the new funding formula, which treated every student equally.

I'm surprised that a former school trustee doesn't know more about this. She doesn't recall. That's the backdrop here.

What did Michael Harris do? Mike Harris implemented almost all of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Learning. Most of it was brought in by David Cooke, who was the NDP member. He was put a head of the implementation committee. Michael Prue might remember; some of the other members were here.

I can only say this: Education is important. We will likely support the bill. This discussion—and Ms. Sandals would know, as the minister; she has been around, probably when I was a trustee—about provincial-wide negotiations is older than you and I. It's been talked about since the beginning of time. The consolidation is, we agree with most of that; we would like to see it go to committee.

I'll have more to say. Hopefully, I'll get an hour later on today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently—and I thank the Speaker for the honour of letting me sit in the chair again, because it is truly in the chair when you most carefully listen to those who are speaking and to those who are heckling. It is a wonderful opportunity to divorce yourself from your respective caucus, sit out there and try to have a fair mind.

I listened to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound as he spoke. He said a lot of things that I expect, coming from members of the official opposition. He said things that I think were meant to damage, in some way, the government opposite. He said many things that he thought were going to somehow damage the NDP for past rights and past wrongs. But I want to say that I

didn't hear anything that distinguished the Conservatives from what we have heard in this House for a very long time.

We all saw in the newspaper two weeks ago a leaked document from the Conservatives on how they were going to run the next election, which they were hoping would come last spring. It was going to be an outright attack on unions, and drinking beer on the bus. Those are the two things I remember: Attack the unions and drink beer on the bus with the guys from the press. Over the course of time and over the course of this speech, there's a defence of Mike Harris and how he dealt with the teachers' unions and others. I remember. Those were very disruptive days. I was a mayor, but I remember going out of the mayor's office and joining the picket line with the teachers around East York Collegiate. They needed our help. They needed help because of the way they were being treated.

I remember the Conservatives saying that Bill 115, as bad as it was, should have been worse, and were very disappointed that it wasn't worse, because then it would have been their bill. I remember them standing here on EllisDon, unrepentant to the end, even after the Liberals learned the lesson and voted the other way. They were still the way they are.

You know, that's what I expected, and that's what I got. Thank you very much, member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We return to the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for his reply.

Mr. Bill Walker: One thing, Mr. Speaker: If nothing else, I sparked some discussion in this House this afternoon, and I'm proud to have done that.

I'll start with my colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo. She talks about revisionist history. I just wish she'd come into this century and not go back 20 years. We're here only talking about the future. What can we do from today on? What can we do collaboratively to make this province a better spot?

They've supported this Liberal government. They've supported a government that has doubled the deficit and the debt in their eight years, and they've got to be proud of that. They talk about trust. What I would like to ask the NDP is, what is truly your plan? You're very quick to be controversial about all of us. What are you going to do if you ever, God forbid, have power again?

I'll go on to the Minister of Community and Social Services. He suggested that she gets it. Well, of course she gets it, because she stands up and votes with them every time they turn around. What is he going to say? He's not going to slam her. He did say, though, that his mom told him that you should fess up and make up. I haven't heard much fess up and make up on the colossal mess they've made of this province in the last eight years. Until they do, we'll continue to do our job as opposition.

I also want to add here that Mike Harris never cut education or health care. In fact, the social services in-

dustry, in my short tenure, is telling me that he's the only one who actually put more funds into social services.

The member from Durham talked about the Royal Commission on Learning. He's been here working his butt off for 18 years. He knows what he's talking about.

The member from Beaches-East York: I'm glad you were listening, Michael, and I always listen to yours as well. I wasn't trying to inflict damage; I was merely pointing out facts so the people at home and the people listening know. You made one other comment about the different approach. We will make decisions that will put this province back in prosperity. We'll create jobs, we'll lessen the debt and we'll ensure that those young people sitting in front of you, Mr. Speaker, the seniors at home and those less advantaged actually have money that is going into programs and services, not paying into a debt that those two parties continue to multiply and contribute to. We will not do that, Speaker. We'll bring it back under rein, and we'll make this province thrive again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

1730

Mr. Michael Prue: I'm hoping that the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound listens to everything I say and perhaps will be able to comment, if that is allowed in his rotation. He threw down a challenge, and I don't normally rise to the bait like some trout, but I cannot help myself.

He wants to know what the NDP would do if we were in power. It's very simple, and none of it involves spending money. I hope the Conservatives will listen to this. We will bring a sense of social justice to the people of Ontario. We will give opportunity, where opportunity has not existed, to the poor and to those who are recent immigrants. We will concentrate on those who are elderly and those who are young so that they have great opportunities and they are not forgotten, and we will never, ever put our party above the needs of the people of Ontario.

We will do all of that in a fiscal way that actually balances the budget. I am proud to say that as a mayor I balanced five budgets, paid off all the debts and built infrastructure. That's the dream that I have to do. That is why I'm hoping, as the member from Beaches-East York and the NDP's finance critic, to bring that kind of fiscal responsibility into the entire debate. That is what has been missing for the past few years, and that is what needs to be brought back.

The budget needs to be balanced. We cannot, as a society, continue to run deficit after deficit, year after year, and we have to understand that there are difficult choices to be made, but those choices must always be the well-being of all of the people of Ontario, not the select few and not the personal friends of whatever government is in power.

Having risen to the bait, I want to start the debate. This bill is a fairly simple bill. You have heard from speakers on all sides of the House—and I just noticed

that I'm down to 10 minutes. Nobody gave me that warning. Oh, well.

In the seven minutes that are remaining—and I thought I had 17—this is a fairly simple bill. It is necessary. It has been brought about because so much tinkering has taken place at school boards over the last many years. When I was first involved in politics, school boards had inordinate power. They had power over setting of budgets.

When I was a mayor, every year there were three parts to the budget: the Metro part, the local municipality or borough part, and the school board part. The increases in the tax rates, more often than not, came from the school boards rather than from either Metro or from the borough of East York. In fact, whenever there were any increases, they were always from the school boards. I did not disparage them. I never said anything against what they were doing. I did say that this was for the benefit of the schools, and that the people had an opportunity, if they didn't like the way the schools were being run, or if they didn't like the programs that were being funded, to tell their school trustees and, every three years, to vote for other ones.

Those school trustees took their jobs very seriously. When the money portion was taken away from them—when they could no longer raise additional revenues—a great many things happened to inner-city schools, particularly in Toronto, with which I'm most familiar, and, I even understand, having heard the questions in question period today, are still happening in the Niagara Falls region, and that is that school boards are being forced to make very difficult choices as the amount of money available to them in many respects dwindles.

I'd like to start first with what the school boards are asking. The school boards are asking for a couple of simple things. They have a couple of simple concerns, and I'd just like to reiterate what they are saying to us. They want to require the school board fees to OPSBA by school boards to support the collective bargaining process—they don't think that, if they are taken out of the mix, they should have to pay for that. I certainly would agree with them. The Ontario Public School Boards' Association "recommends that the government directly support/fund the employer bargaining agents, as they have in the past."

The school boards, in many cases, are having to make very difficult choices. I know in my own riding—and I have asked these questions of the minister several times in the last year—the money available to the Toronto District School Board has been spent. We have inner-city schools in my own riding, around the Crescent Town area, the areas north of Danforth, where the schools are in very bad repair, and there is no money available for that. I think that the school boards, in collective bargaining, if they are forced to pay out money, as this bill says—may cause difficulty to them. So I am asking the government to look at this one particular aspect, because it needs to be remedied.

I also listened intently to what some of the teachers had to say about this bill. They have some concerns, although this is not the kind of concern where they're out

there picketing or yelling. They just want to have a sensible conversation, and it's why we, in the New Democratic Party, are willing to sit down and have a sensible conversation about this particular bill. The dynamics of the collective bargaining process have changed remarkably, and because the dynamics have changed, there need to be some safeguards built into this process.

The government is allowing, through this bill, if I am reading it correctly, its own status as a non-party. It means that the government is not governed by the Ontario Labour Relations Act rules regarding good-faith bargaining, as it is not a formal party, according to the Ontario Labour Relations Act.

If I am wrong, perhaps the minister can tell me. But when you are not a party, when you are a non-party, and then you get to impose your decision between the two parties who are attempting to bargain in good faith, this ensures that there are going to be some difficulties. So I ask, when we're sitting down there, should this bill pass at second reading and go on to committee, that the government take a very good look at what role it is going to have as a non-party.

The second issue that is somewhat troubling to me is that this bill says that the arbitration criteria are very explicit on the ability of the employer to pay out, and what they can pay out, but there is no mention of fair remuneration, decent working conditions or anything else that might concern members of any bargaining unit.

A teacher's job is not a cushy job, as some in this House would say. It is not two months off in the summer and a long period of time off at other times of the year and getting paid throughout. That is not the reality. The reality is that teachers work very hard.

I had the opportunity, in the last two weeks, to go to two high school commencement exercises. I went there and I watched these young men and women who finished school last June come back to their high school and come back to show the whole world what was happening to them. Some went off to college. Some went off to university. Some went into the working world. Unfortunately, all too many of them, because grade 13 has been eliminated, were doing—whatever it's called—grade 12 a second time around because they did not find themselves emotionally prepared, I guess, to go off to college. Some of them, even Ontario scholars with more than 80%, have come back to do a second year in grade 12, because they cannot get into the courses that they want in either the college or the university, because in some of those colleges and universities, as I read in my Maclean's this weekend, you need 90% or 95% to get into the course you want.

I saw them, and I saw the deference, and I saw the respect that they gave to their teachers. When people in the audience were identified—and I was identified, and the member of Parliament was identified, and the school board trustee was identified—the ones who got the loudest cheers from those graduating students were the principals and the teachers. They were the ones who got the applause, because those students recognized the com-

mitment and that they had given their all. I think we need to remember that when we're negotiating.

I think we also need to look in this bill and see whether the government should be given the absolute authority to set the term of the collective agreement that gives the government the ability to define whether it's a two-year, a three-year or a four-year term. I will tell you, in almost every negotiation that takes place in the public or private sector anywhere in this country, that is defined by the people who sit down to do the bargaining. I don't know how the government determines whether it's two, three, or four years, other than to do it to their own advantage, and I would ask that we look at this as well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity of my 10 minutes.

1740

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to be able to comment on the comments from the member for Beaches—East York on Bill 122. I'd like to start by actually congratulating him for talking to the bill, which is sort of a novel approach this afternoon, in some cases.

I do have to comment on one of his sidebar comments about dwindling funding. I think we do need to keep funding for the education sector in perspective. When you look at the increase in education funding since 2003, the funding has gone up, on average, 50% per pupil. That's a pretty significant increase, I think, by anybody's measure, when you look at the increase per pupil that's being spent on education.

The member mentioned a number of technical details in the bill, and the member is quite correct that it is a very technical bill. I would just like to assure the member, as we consulted extensively with both the union and the school board representatives prior to tabling the bill, that we continue to consult with both the unions and the school boards' associations post tabling.

I think we all understand that to get to a point where if there's some fine-tuning that needs to be done, that we need to have the second reading vote, get it out of here and into committee, because it's in the committee that we can do any fine tuning of those technical details that's required.

I would also like to assure people that while this is a very extensive bill on school board collective bargaining, the Labour Relations Act remains the underpinning of the collective bargaining, and we worked very closely with the Minister of Labour and his officials to make sure that is the case.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to be here. I listened carefully to the member from Beaches—East York and, in fact, I did listen to the comments and response by the Minister of Education.

I want to refer members to the recent Creating Jobs and Growing the Economy, the economic outlook revealed last week, and on page 72 there's a section that does

address exactly that question. It's called—be careful of the wording here, because the minister did say we must keep in view that the funding has gone up 50% per student, okay? Here's what she says—treacherous words: "School Board Efficiencies and Modernization." In 2013, the provincial government announced "an efficiencies and modernization savings strategy that aims to achieve long-term" stability in the school board.

Now they're taking over the highest-cost function of school boards. About 90% of the school board budget is the wages and benefits part. So if they're taking over the pull on that, the question on whether or not school boards—and what do "modernization" and "streamlining" mean? It means significant changes, probably cuts.

Going into the election—I think the member from Leeds—Grenville said it more succinctly earlier, and he used the term "kiss and make up" bill. I think it should be an "attempt to kiss and make up" bill. The reason I say that is I can't trust the current government. They say one thing and do something the opposite.

We're moving towards an election. They're not going to have—it's like Neville Chamberlain—peace at any price. That's why we got into this dilemma, that they've bought their way through all of these collective agreements. Now we're overpriced, and they're going to attack the most fundamental part of education—which is the role of the school boards—the money part. They're taking all of that back. The boards will be left with "Here's the money for the books and a bit of money for transportation." That's all that's left.

It's a shame, quite honestly, that the member from Beaches—East York, who I think is a remarkably kind-spirited person—I think he meant well. I hope the Minister of Education responds to some of his inquiries.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's always a pleasure for me to respond to the member from Beaches—East York. He has a long-standing history in this House and so, regardless of the attempts at revisionism, he still knows the truth, which is great.

It is interesting, though, to hear some of the responses to what he has said, especially around concerns around reducing funding for education coming from the PC Party, because they supported Bill 115 wholeheartedly, except that they said it didn't go far enough. So for them to stand up in the House today and say, "We're really concerned about public education funding," and yet they propped this government up with Bill 115, then—you just cannot have it both ways. You really can't.

I understand that there's a level of frustration that the PC Party is experiencing. We've seen it all afternoon. In fact, it's an emerging trend. Having a track record of actually not accomplishing anything is really frustrating, and I can understand that. I think that actually, as the previous member had mentioned, the by-elections pretty much proved that, because they didn't get any seats. I

mean, Doug Holyday and Rob Ford got the Etobicoke–Lakeshore seat. It's official—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Ford nation.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's out there. Ford nation is alive and—

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: We're cautiously supporting Bill 122 because we feel that there's value in having clarity around the players at the table. We also feel strongly that the school boards who actually represent the main interests of students in this province, who know those needs of those students extremely well, need to have a respectful place at that table so that they can bring the concerns of their constituents to the Ministry of Education. Then we'll go from there.

This will get to second reading. We will address some of the issues that we feel need to be addressed. This is the right direction today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Milloy: I simply want to make the case that this is a very important piece of legislation. We've had a good preliminary debate here. Let's send this bill to committee so that it can be looked at in detail.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I now return to the member for Beaches–East York to reply.

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank the Minister of Education, the member from Durham, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and the government House leader for their comments.

Dealing with each of them in turn, I would acknowledge that the government has increased funding for education generally over the last number of years. But I have to, in my own heart, ask why, in spite of that funding, children in my riding are going to raccoon-infested portables—40 portables around a single school. They are screaming. They are demanding—the parents—that their children have better education. They are demanding, in an inner city, why some of them have to walk up to two and a half kilometres to go to a school after they've been displaced because there are so many kids coming into the system. In my riding we're not seeing the money being spent in a way that we think it ought to be spent.

I know that there are problems elsewhere. I know that there are small rural schools that communities are trying to save, but I also think if you come to Toronto to some of the inner-city schools and see the overcrowding and the poor conditions, then it doesn't matter how much money is being spent if it's not being spent wisely.

To the member from Durham, I thank you for your comments, as always. You're always fairly gentle with me. I wish, though, that you had let your colleague, who was dying to say something—and I think would have been far more fiery—say it for you.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo, I thank you for your erudite comments; they're always very generous.

To the government House leader, though, here we come back to this same issue again that plagued us a couple of weeks ago. He stands up, and his only comment is that he wants this to be sent off to committee. It will go to committee. He's suggesting that we've had enough debate, but I just stood here again in this House today and watched Minister McMeekin stand in his place and say that he wanted more debate. The government can't have it both ways. You can't say that you want to have more debate because you have limited actions that you can take, although you do have some. Some of those would include consulting with the House leaders of the other parties. You can't exhaust that, and so we'll have debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I rise with great interest to talk about Bill 122 and its stated purpose, which is to provide better clarity in the collective bargaining process. It's not designed either to improve the outcomes for the students or deliver a better way of delivering education in this province.

1750

The Ontario PCs have highlighted how our schools need deep reform to equip our students for the challenges of the 21st century. For instance, we need to focus on delivering excellent numeracy and literacy, which has been under pressure over the last number of years. We advocate for an enhanced role for our parents, who are only second to the students themselves in their desire for them to succeed. Two per cent of our teachers today, we see, have had a post-secondary course in mathematics, and we wonder why we're falling behind and our scores are actually dropping in the mathematics and science side. Those are issues that need to be addressed.

Bill 122 establishes a national and local bargaining process and includes the crown in the education bargaining framework, which is not the case elsewhere in Ontario's public sector. We cannot know the full effect of this legislation until a full round of negotiations is concluded, which will take years, and that's why the Ontario PC caucus will seek to amend this bill to include a review and a sunset policy so that we can review just what the success rate was or where the pitfalls were with this legislation.

We have seen this government make glaring mistakes in legislation and regulation-making. We wish to guarantee that Ontario students will not suffer from this government's mistakes if this bill turns out to be another one. We cannot forget that this bill comes on the heels of Bill 115, in which the government demonstrated a severe lack of leadership and commitment. It is really, as my colleague from Leeds–Grenville said, a kiss-and-make-up bill, one that is looking to bring back the relationship.

The province is facing severe fiscal pressures in the coming years, and we need to take action today to tackle some of the largest items of public spending. The largest, of course, is public sector compensation. Ever since the beginning of this Parliament, we have advocated consist-

ently and honestly for a comprehensive, direct, legislated two-year public service wage freeze in order to stem the bleeding that is driving our province deeper and deeper into debt. We have been open and honest with our intention to tackle the deficit and debt head-on. When the government submitted Bill 115, we acknowledged that it was not a solution to the deficit. However, we welcomed the beginning of the government's realization that they could not be able to live on borrowed money alone and forever.

Political expedience, however, has taken the place of long-term financial sustainability. The same old Wynne government has sought to endure itself once again to the traditional public sector organized labour base. In education, this has meant shutting the doors to young, driven, passionate, newly qualified teachers by mandating that hiring be based on seniority alone. The government's excuse for this mess is an attempt to take nepotism out of the system.

Our leader submitted an order question on the subject on October 29, and one could only assume that the government would know how many actual complaints about nepotism they received that had led to the harsh regulation 274. It isn't a hard question, and one doesn't require months to research it; it's just a number.

Instead, the government is taking its time to answer. Considering their delinquency in responding to our previous batch of questions, one can only assume that the summer session will be in before we find out. This is the context in which Bill 122 comes into existence. It has been met with prudent skepticism by most stakeholders who wish to evaluate the full effect of the bill as several rounds of negotiation are completed.

What we do not see, however, is any action to bring our education system into the 21st century and to give our students the best chances to succeed in an ever-increasingly globalized and competitive world. This province needs significant reforms to again take its rightful position as the economic leader in Canada. Our teachers deserve clarity on what their job is, as we have advocated with our proposal to include what teachers already do in their job description.

Parents, principals and teachers deserve a greater say in how their schools are administered and how the curriculum is taught. Instead, we have seen an increasing creep towards centralization, and Bill 122 does nothing to reverse this trend. The figurative Ontario education shop needs a capital renovation. Instead, the government is simply rearranging the shelves.

We will watch the effects of this bill closely and keep reminding the members on the other side that we need bold action, not just tinkering with the process. Bill 122 is another look-good bill that is intended to restore the very lucrative relationship of this Liberal Party with the provincial teachers' unions, which are major contributors. There's nothing to do about students' or the parents' concerns, or about improving education outcomes, or to make Ontario's education system the best it could be.

A college teacher at our local coffee club expressed his disappointment with the students that fail to hand in projects and assignments upon reaching college, a practice they learned in elementary and secondary schools today, where a teacher can't penalize students who fail to meet deadlines. Instead, they need to renegotiate new deadlines. They do it over and over again. Folks, this isn't training our young for the real world. It's not the way it's done when they get to college or university, where failing out tends to cost the student, the parent and the government lots of unnecessary money. Students can't make the change to post-secondary requirements that deadlines are deadlines, just like work. Students failing out, wasting their tuition and living expenses because of a lack of training for the real world: a failed practice that has been instituted by this government.

The government has to start listening to parents and employers. To date, this government has meandered through the last 10 years, directing legislation to make their donors happy so that their coffers are full; sadly, putting the Liberal Party's interests ahead of the residents of this province. Our students are graduating with no jobs to go to in this province. Instead of making the bold steps necessary to turn this province around, they continue to pander to their donors. They refuse to listen to the employers in this province that tell them that red tape and regulation is killing them, forcing them to move to regions where governments welcome them with legislation that encourages innovation and growth.

How many times have we seen jobs leave this province in the last 10 years? This past week, we had Heinz. In the past month, it was US Steel. During their reign, this list has grown embarrassingly long—Xstrata in North Bay, and in my riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, 3,600 jobs by the end of 2006 alone—a sad record for what was once the economic engine of Canada. In my son's engineering class of 2011, more than half his class went out to Alberta to find employment. It's truly a sad state of affairs.

What's the answer? Thirty-six panels and committees travelling the province is just not working. Does this new Premier, after more than 10 years in government, not have any ideas of what businesses, small and large, have been screaming for for years? Get out of the way, and help with competitive legislation, energy rates, WSIB, and the other things that they go on so that they can actually prosper this province.

What have we seen? Back to education: This party is determined to look good at the expense of results. Time and money is spent on passing the student testing—instead of learning the material, pulling students out of the test if the teacher believes they won't pass, and a follow-up to see how they failed to pull out a student if they failed to pass, instead of looking at whether or not they know the material. This is the classic talk about, "Look how the results are going." But we're cooking the books.

A local teacher highlighted to me how they need to change the apprenticeship ratios to allow more students

to be successful in the trades. He's tired of encouraging students to move into the trades as part of the high school co-op program, where there are no limits on the apprenticeship ratios, only to have them enter college and be forced to drop out because they fall under the 3-to-1 ratio and they no longer can get the experience they need to finish the program—after they waste thousands of dollars in tuition, living expenses and lost income opportunities. How can this be, when studies show that a critical shortfall of skilled labour will soon be upon us? These are

good-paying, highly skilled jobs, and we'll be looking to import new people to fill these jobs, only to have to pay higher taxes to look after the people whom we haven't got jobs for.

Thank you for this, Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedzicki

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France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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intellectuelle**

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Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Continued from back cover

Jimmy Velgakis	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	4371
Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji	
Mrs. Amrit Mangat	4372
Olivia Wise	
Mr. Michael Harris	4372
Nutrition for Learning	
Ms. Catherine Fife	4372
Don Burke	
Mr. John Fraser	4372
Youth of Oxford county	
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	4373
Élizabeth Allard	
M. Phil McNeely	4373
Bancroft hospital auxiliary	
Mr. Todd Smith	4373

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act (Prohibiting Flavoured Tobacco, New Tobacco Products and Smokeless Tobacco), 2013, Bill 130, Mme Gélinas / Loi de 2013 modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée (interdiction du tabac aromatisé, des nouveaux produits du tabac et du tabac sans fumée), projet de loi 130, Mme Gélinas	
First reading agreed to	4374
Mme France Gélinas	4374
Youth Smoking Prevention Act, 2013, Bill 131, Ms. Matthews / Loi de 2013 sur la prévention du tabagisme chez les jeunes, projet de loi 131, Mme Matthews	
First reading agreed to	4374

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Anti-smoking legislation	
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4374
Mrs. Christine Elliott	4375
Mme France Gélinas	4376

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Minimum wage	
Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette	4377
Home care	
Mme France Gélinas	4377

Waste reduction	
Ms. Soo Wong	4377
Darlington nuclear generating station	
Mr. John O'Toole	4377
Office of the Ombudsman	
Miss Monique Taylor	4378
Legal aid	
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	4378
Markdale hospital	
Mr. Bill Walker	4378
Air-rail link	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	4378
Small business	
Ms. Soo Wong	4378
Lyme disease	
Mr. Steve Clark	4379
Minimum wage	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	4379
Tire disposal	
Mr. John O'Toole	4379
Dog ownership	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	4379
Tire disposal	
Mr. Bill Walker	4380

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2013, Bill 122, Mrs. Sandals / Loi de 2013 sur la négociation collective dans les conseils scolaires, projet de loi 122, Mme Sandals	
Mr. Peter Tabuns	4380
Ms. Soo Wong	4387
Mr. Jim McDonell	4387
Mr. Taras Natyshak	4388
Mrs. Liz Sandals	4388
Mr. Peter Tabuns	4388
Mr. Steve Clark	4389
Mr. Percy Hatfield	4391
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	4392
Mr. Bill Walker	4392
Mr. Peter Tabuns	4392
Mr. Steve Clark	4393
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	4393
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	4395
Mr. Jim McDonell	4396
Mr. Michael Prue	4396
Mr. Phil McNeely	4396
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	4397

Mr. Toby Barrett.....	4397
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	4399
Hon. Yasir Naqvi.....	4400
Mr. Bill Walker.....	4400
Mr. Michael Prue.....	4401
Mr. Toby Barrett.....	4401
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	4401
Ms. Soo Wong.....	4404
Mr. Steve Clark.....	4404
Mr. Michael Mantha.....	4405
Mr. Joe Dickson.....	4405
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	4405
Mr. Bill Walker.....	4406
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	4409
Hon. Ted McMeekin.....	4410
Mr. John O'Toole.....	4410
Mr. Michael Prue.....	4410
Mr. Bill Walker.....	4411
Mr. Michael Prue.....	4411
Hon. Liz Sandals.....	4413
Mr. John O'Toole.....	4413
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	4413
Hon. John Milloy.....	4414
Mr. Michael Prue.....	4414
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	4414
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	4416

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 18 November 2013 / Lundi 18 novembre 2013

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Monte McNaughton	4359
Mr. Taras Natyshak	4359
Hon. John Gerretsen	4359
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	4359
Mr. Todd Smith	4359
Ms. Mitzie Hunter	4359
Hon. Charles Sousa	4359
Mr. Jim Wilson	4359
Mr. Bas Balkissoon	4359
Hon. Charles Sousa	4359
Ms. Catherine Fife	4359
Hamilton Tiger-Cats	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	4359
Correction of record	
Mr. Todd Smith	4359
Member's birthday	
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	4360
Death of member's son	
Mr. Shafiq Qadri	4360

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Manufacturing jobs	
Mr. Tim Hudak	4360
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4360
Manufacturing jobs	
Mr. Tim Hudak	4361
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4361
Hon. Eric Hoskins	4362
Government's agenda	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	4362
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4362
Government's record	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	4363
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4363
Ontario economy	
Mr. Victor Fedeli	4364
Hon. Charles Sousa	4364
Manufacturing jobs	
Mr. Taras Natyshak	4364
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4365
Small business	
Mr. Grant Crack	4365

Hon. Charles Sousa	4365
Pan Am Games	
Mr. Rod Jackson	4366
Hon. John Milloy	4366
Cancer treatment	
Mr. Percy Hatfield	4366
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4366
Cancer treatment	
Mr. Phil McNeely	4367
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4367
Cancer treatment	
Mrs. Christine Elliott	4367
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4367
Thunder Bay generating station	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	4368
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	4368
Accessibility for the disabled	
Mr. John Fraser	4368
Hon. Eric Hoskins	4368
Manufacturing jobs	
Mr. Rick Nicholls	4369
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4369
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	4369
Special education	
Ms. Cindy Forster	4370
Hon. Liz Sandals	4370
Greenhouse gas emissions	
Ms. Mitzie Hunter	4370
Hon. James J. Bradley	4370
Notice of dissatisfaction	
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	4371
Visitors	
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	4371

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	4371
--------------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Disaster relief	
Mr. Peter Shurman	4371

Continued on inside back cover

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 19 November 2013

Mardi 19 novembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 19 November 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 19 novembre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (LEAVES TO HELP FAMILIES), 2013 LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (CONGÉS POUR AIDER LES FAMILLES)

Mr. Naqvi moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 21, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill child care and crime-related child death or disappearance leaves of absence / *Projet de loi 21, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour les aidants naturels, le congé pour soins à un enfant gravement malade et le congé en cas de décès ou de disparition d'un enfant dans des circonstances criminelles.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister moves third reading of Bill 21. Mr. Naqvi.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me. It's my great pleasure to rise for third reading of the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families), 2013. I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Brampton West. It is a pleasure to speak to this proposed legislation because of what this bill can mean to Ontario families and their seriously ill loved ones.

I also want to thank several individual groups who are in the gallery today, or are arriving in the gallery as we speak—good morning and welcome to Queen's Park—for their commitment and support in helping this bill move forward. I want to mention and recognize them in the House and recognize their effort and hard work in support of this bill and bringing it to where it is today, and hopefully its passage through third reading in short order as well.

With us today we have Delia Sinclair, who is herself a caregiver and joining us today as the public policy and stakeholder relations coordinator for the Alzheimer's Society of Ontario; Vanessa Foran, the vice-president, public affairs and national programs for the Parkinson

Society and representing the Ontario Caregiver Coalition. Welcome. Joanne Di Nardo and Nicole McInerney, the senior manager and senior coordinator of public issues at the Canadian Cancer Society are with us today as well; and Abidah Lalani, the manager of government relations for the MS Society of Canada; Nicole Beben, VP of care and knowledge exchange at Saint Elizabeth; and Eleanor Leggat, vice-president, support services, on behalf of the ALS Society. I also believe Sue VanderBent, who is the executive director of the Ontario Home Care Association, is with us as well. Welcome, again, to Queen's Park and thank you very much for your commitment and dedication to looking after our loved ones, be it at home or in a home care setting, and also for convincing the government that this is an important bill that is going to provide relief for our families, especially those who need care at home, in particular, in our communities. I'm very happy that you're here for the third reading debate.

Speaker, this particular bill goes to the heart of what government should do. This legislation would help the working people of our province to be with their loved ones when they are needed most, at times of major health issues and in tragic situations involving children.

As important as the contents of Bill 21 are, the reason for introducing it is just as important, and that is: compassion. When our government introduced this bill, I had the pleasure of meeting the Munante family from Orléans in Ottawa. The member for Ottawa-Orléans joined me when we went to visit the Munante family. Gabriel, an amazing little seven-year-old, is bravely battling leukemia. Gabriel is affectionately known as Gabo, and just meeting him just puts a smile on your face. You can imagine a seven-year-old; they tend to be shy when they meet somebody new. A beautiful young boy, close to his parents—I don't know to what extent he is aware of the illness he's living through, but one can be confident that he knows what's going on, given the love and the care he has been receiving from his parents.

Patricia and Carlos, the parents, have been doing whatever it takes to be with him during his treatment. I remember Carlos, the dad, saying, "I know a lot of parents don't get that opportunity so this legislation is absolutely going to help them if they have to go through something like this. I can't imagine having to go to work those first four months at least when he was diagnosed. I think this is very important for families."

Now, Speaker, Carlos worked for the federal government and had accumulated enough leave to take time off when his son was diagnosed. Not all families can do that. Patricia, the mom, said to me, "We have seen some

families where ... if they're from out of town, one of the parents is unable to be with their child because they do need to work."

I know that every parent wants to be there, and the family caregiver leave would protect a parent's job while they are looking after their sick or injured loved one.

This bill is about giving families time to look after their loved ones without worrying about their jobs, because looking after a loved one should never put their jobs at risk. Anybody may need some type of job protection so that they are not caught in a situation where they are trying to balance out staying at home, looking after their loved ones or keeping their job.

That whole meeting, Speaker, with Patricia and Carlos and Gabo highlighted to me how important it is that we have legislation like this; how important it is that we ensure that parents, who love their children so much, have that opportunity to stay at home and focus on their child and nothing else: not work, no other things in life but their child, so that they can be with him or her to ensure that the child is growing, is strong and is able to fight any challenge that he or she may be facing.

That's definitely true for children, Speaker. I've got an 18-month-old son who I know, as a dad, I will do anything for. When my son, Rafi, was born, he faced some medical challenges as well. We, of course—my wife, Christine, and I—felt very lucky and fortunate to, one, have the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, CHEO, in our community very close to our home to ensure that Rafi is fine, that all his needs are met. Also, most importantly, besides having a great health care institution, the best doctors and nurses and all kinds of support workers being there for you at all times, which is extremely reassuring, especially for new parents, with the kind of anxiety one goes through, I also faced that reality for the very first time of not being selfish at all, not worrying about what my needs may be and being very singularly focused on the needs of my son Rafi. Whatever he needed, whatever time he needed, whatever attention, resources, I would have done anything, and I'm sure my wife as well, to get that to him.

0910

That, Speaker, really speaks to the heart of the issue. If we, the government, we, the legislators, can do even a small bit to help alleviate that anxiety that parents may feel towards their child because of whatever health-related circumstances, I think we've done our job. We can take that anxiety, especially when it comes to ensuring that parents can feel that one less thing they have to worry about is their job—if they can take time off and know their job is protected by law, that is a huge, huge pressure off parents so they can really focus on what matters most, and that is their child or children.

I think the same goes for parents, for your elders. We know that we live in an incredible time right now where our elders, our parents, our grandparents are living longer. This is an amazing thing, to have that family around you, to have that support around you. They're healthier, they live longer; they live vibrant lives. But that also

means they need more support. It also means they may need more care. We also know that our seniors now want to live at home. They don't want to be in a retirement residence. They don't want to be in a nursing home. They prefer not to be in a long-term-care facility either. If they can live at home and get care at home, that's where they thrive, that's where they have their independence, that's where they know their surroundings best. If we can create opportunities for we who want to look after our parents, to provide them some care, that's great.

My parents are getting older. I'm in that generation now that I see the health challenges coming to my parents as just a matter of age, even though they live healthy lives. You can see that the frequency of attention or care that they need is growing. That's something my siblings and I are constantly reminded of as we make plans: making sure that one of us is closer to mom and dad, in case. Our family is not unique. When I speak to my friends, they are going through exactly the same evolution in life, so to speak. We're all going through the same experiences. When you talk to them—once in a while I will actually talk about work with my friends—and when I talk about legislation like this, there's almost this unanimous support for a mechanism by which, if you have to take some time off to look after your mom or your dad, as we do, as we should, again you do not need to worry about your job: You have statutory protection that would allow you to take some time off and focus on your ailing parent.

Speaker, this bill is amazing in that respect: It's very practical. It doesn't really speak of some notion up there which many governments and we in this Legislature tend to talk about. This really, actually, in my experience, is one bill that has a direct impact on our lives, on the lives of our constituents. This is really one piece of legislation that does not need a lot of explaining when you're talking to your constituents, be it at the door or in your community office.

A few months ago, I very distinctly remember I was out in my community in Ottawa Centre, as I am on a weekly basis, going through one of the neighbourhoods, knocking on doors and asking my constituents if I could help them with anything. At one of the doors I went to, a man roughly my age opened the door. I asked the same thing; I introduced myself and said, "Is there anything I can help you with, any issues or concerns?" It was a cold day, actually, so it was earlier in the year. He said, "Come on inside." I went inside and he said, "You just brought some bill around getting job-protected leave." You really get this. You really get, at the door, somebody asking you a very precise question about a particular bill. People live busy lives and they have other priorities on their minds—rightly so. I said, "Yes, it's the family caregiver leave," and very quickly explained it. This guy, like I said, was my age, probably a good foot taller than me—

Mr. Bill Mauro: So still a pretty short guy.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: That's commentary on me, of course; my height. I appreciate that from the member.

Listen to this: He said that to me, and I explained it to him, and this man started crying. He started crying. He

had tears in his eyes because he said to me that his son faced a very significant health challenge. His son was there; I think he was roughly four years old, a beautiful little boy. He said to me, "I would have loved this piece of legislation four years ago, when my son was born." He said to me, "Kudos for doing something right. It's great that you're bringing this legislation." He apologized to me, of course, very quickly for being so emotional, and I said, "No apology needed. I guess it's good to hear that we're doing something here at Queen's Park that can help your life get better—not in your instance, but maybe somebody else's."

I only share this because I think it's powerful. It was powerful for me. I was overtaken by emotion when I left that home. It was a great sense of purpose for me. I think I was very new at my job as the Minister of Labour at that time. It was the first piece of legislation that I introduced as a minister for this government. Just to get that very direct feedback from a constituent—very personal—made me realize how important this bill is. It really made me think how directly this impacts our lives. You don't need some complicated, convoluted explanation as to how this is good for Ontario. This is straightforward. This helps families. This is very much about compassion.

The leaves-to-help-families legislation, if passed, would create family caregiver leave which would provide up to eight weeks of unpaid job-protected leave so that employees can care for family members who have a serious medical condition. An employee could take up to eight weeks of family caregiver leave per year per family member. A family member for whom an employee could request unpaid time off to provide care or support would include the employee's spouse; a parent, step-parent or foster parent of the employee or the employee's spouse; a child, stepchild or foster child of the employee or the employee's spouse; a grandparent, step-grandparent, grandchild or step-grandchild of the employee or the employee's spouse; the spouse of a child of the employee; the employee's brother or sister or a relative of the employee who is dependent on the employee for care or assistance.

0920

Our proposed leaves-to-help-families legislation would also entitle eligible parents to a critically ill child care leave, which would provide up to 37 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to provide care to a critically ill child if they have been employed by their employer for at least six months. This could provide incalculable human assistance to parents and children facing such a crisis.

In addition, this bill will show compassion by creating crime-related child death or disappearance leave. This leave would provide up to 52 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for parents of a missing child where the disappearance is likely due to a crime. It would also provide up to 104 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for parents of a child who has died where the death is probably the result of a crime.

The hard-working people of Ontario and those who depend on them deserve nothing less than this. The same

spirit of compassion that inspired this bill also led our government to introduce family medical leave back in 2004. Family medical leave provides unpaid, job-protected leave for employees when a family member is facing a terminal condition. Our proposed family caregiver leave would apply in cases of a serious medical condition, even when there is no significant risk of imminent death. Our proposed family caregiver leave would be in addition to family medical leave. This means that if you are caring for a loved one under the proposed family caregiver leave and their condition becomes terminal, you would also be entitled to family medical leave.

Our province also provides personal emergency leave. This leave can be taken for a personal illness, injury or medical emergency of an employee, or the death, illness, injury or medical emergency of, or matter concerning, certain family members and relatives who are dependent on you for care and assistance. Personal emergency leave is an unpaid, job-protected leave that allows you to take up to 10 days per calendar year away from work in workplaces of 50 or more employees.

Every member of this House and all those who are listening today to these proceedings share a common human experience: We're either sons or daughters. We have parents and grandparents, and we may have spouses and children. In short, we are all part of a family. So when those family members have major health problems, we want to be there because we care. We all know that there are many things the members of this House may debate and have varied opinions on, but the need for care and compassion for our loved ones, when they face a medical crisis, is not an issue that divides us but unites us as a House and as a province.

This is an issue on which we are, in every sense, one Ontario, and that is because everyone here today, or who may be watching these proceedings on television, knows that when our loved ones face a major health problem, we need to be there at their side. There's just nothing more important than that. Our families, those we are closest to, need us close when serious health issues occur. It is when we face a major medical problem that we realize just how dependent we are on those who care for us. It is when our family members have major health issues and our children face a crisis that we realize just how dependent they are on us. They're vulnerable, and our legislation seeks to help them by helping the working people who will care for seriously ill family members.

At these times, when we are faced with the health problems of those we love, our concentration and concerns are not on our day-to-day work but on caring for and working to restore those we love to health. We all know time stands still when our loved ones face such crises, and at these times nothing else matters—certainly not that voice mail at work or that deadline we thought required our full attention—because at these times, our hearts and minds are elsewhere, with those we love who are ill and may be suffering.

Our legislation, if passed, would give the working people of this province the right to take care of their

loved ones during very difficult times without having to worry about losing their jobs. Nothing can be more fair and compassionate in such times of need. Our bill would allow working Ontarians the one thing they need most when it comes to caring for seriously ill or injured family members: time to be with their loved ones.

That time of need could be the result of a heart attack or cancer or a car accident. Such a time of family crisis can also come when a child is rushed to hospital or, tragically, when a child is missing or dies as a result of a crime. This bill is for the young families or single parent who needs to care for their children in hospital with a serious condition; it is for the husband seeing his wife through a difficult period of chemotherapy; it is for someone helping to care for an elderly parent recovering from a broken hip. In short, it is for all of us when we need it.

Our legislation, if passed, would protect both full- and part-time employees and even those on temporary contract, and it would help protect their families. I think we can all probably speak of personal circumstances where we may have had to take time off in order to look after a loved one, someone who is close to us, who is a member of our family and had to face some sort of serious medical condition, and therefore had to take the time off.

I think what the challenge really becomes is this: Should we have to make a choice between looking after a loved one in their prolonged need of care or worry about our job, whether it's protected or not? This legislation tries to reconcile those two realities that many Ontarians face on a regular basis.

As those in this House know, we have asked our federal counterparts to provide employment insurance entitlement for those who qualify for family caregiver leave under this bill who are caring for family members with a serious medical condition, just as they do under our family medical leave. We want, and have asked, the federal government to enter into a partnership with us on this so that these caregivers will also have the income security they need and deserve.

If passed, this legislation would give the province's working people time: time to care for their seriously ill elderly parent; time to be with their hospitalized child; time to be with their spouse who has had a stroke or heart attack. Because all Ontarians are part of a family, we know that both employers and employees alike can face these difficult situations and personal crises when loved ones need care. The need for this legislation is clear and becomes all the more obvious when serious medical problems afflict our loved ones.

The reason we have brought this bill forward and worked with all parties in committee to make it a reality is most obvious when we pick up the telephone and it is difficult news about the health of someone close to us. The need and reason behind this proposed legislation is all too familiar to anyone who has ever personally faced the challenge of balancing work with family members who are struggling with major health problems.

There was a time when our world and our society moved at a slower pace, but as we all know, the world

has changed. We are sometimes called the sandwich generation—I was speaking to that a little earlier—a generation of busy parents who are often both working and trying to care for children while, at the same time, often facing the challenge of caring for aging parents or one another when serious health problems arise.

0930

It is times like these that we realize just how important, how critical, it is to have our jobs, our livelihoods, protected when loved ones with major health issues need us most. It is then that we realize our human limitations: in dealing with a family crisis that may involve children and may require 100% of our time.

No one in these situations should have the additional burden of worrying about whether they can take some time off to deal with these personal family medical crises. But without the security of knowing our jobs are protected, and in a way we can count on, sometimes those who need us can be afraid for us and not want to ask for help, not wanting to jeopardize our job, our livelihood, that they may depend upon as much as we do.

Our loved ones can be very legitimately concerned that they are taking us away from our jobs, even jeopardizing them. For the family—the husbands and wives and, at times especially, the parents—of working Ontarians, this reluctance to reach out and ask for help can come from the knowledge that their spouse or child does not currently have the job protection they need, because they may fear that a request for help could cost their loved one their job. That is why, Speaker, we are proposing this legislation.

But there are, as well, other compelling and pressing reasons. That is why I'd like to speak about Ontarians who need to care for their seriously ill and aging parents. We all know that in our society, we have an aging population. We're going to have 43% more seniors a decade from now and twice as many seniors 20 years from now, and that is definitely a good thing. I'm sure all those in this House hope to be among them eventually.

But we also know that as people age, they need more care. It is at those times of health crises, when serious medical conditions—like a broken hip or a stroke—occur, that our human need is also critical. Our deserving seniors, our aging parents, naturally want to be at home as long as they can be. One day, we will likely feel the same.

We know that care by family members helps to ensure their ability to remain where they want to be: in their own homes, where they are most comfortable and feel more secure. At home, there is less expense for our health care system and less pressure on needed health services.

Our government, Speaker, through the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, Deb Matthews, launched a care strategy to help seniors remain healthy and to provide better quality care in the home, where they desire to be. As both the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the minister responsible for seniors have said, our proposed family caregiver leave will support our government's Seniors Strategy. This strategy recognizes that

providing good care at home allows our older Ontarians to remain where they want to be while, at the same time, relieving the stress on our hospital and long-term-care system.

This is a very important step forward, Speaker, but to take this step, family caregivers have to be able to be there, and our proposed family caregiver leave recognizes this vital role family members play in our health care system. To provide that care, to fulfill that role, the working people of Ontario need to know that their jobs are protected and will be there while they are looking after their loved ones.

A young woman who knows this from personal experience is Marcella Robless. Her experience is touching and compelling. I would like to read from remarks she made on the day that this legislation was introduced. She said, "I took care of my mom for about three years. I am the sole caregiver for her. I've been in Canada now for about 28 years. The only family that I have now is my brother who is in Montreal and my mother who lives with me. We're not fortunate to have a lot of relatives so all of the pressure and her care is on me. Two years of the three that I've been taking care of my mother I was in a full-time job. I don't know how I did it, but I managed to do both things.

"Those very same two years were the worst years for my mother. She was on radiation, had chemotherapy and surgery ... but what I have to say is that care-giving is not just bringing them to the appointments or bringing them to CT scans and MRIs—being a caregiver is also being there in the middle of the night, being there all the time. We don't have a break; you can't tell a disease or injury, 'Okay, I need a few days off and then I'll be back and take care of you.' So I really hope that you will support this bill.

"As caregivers we are not invincible, and we need support. I definitely need to feel, if I get a full-time job and my mother winds up being eligible for surgery, I can be there for her and not worry about it."

This touching human account resonates with many of us who have aging parents or other loved ones with a serious medical condition, and at the same time are trying to juggle their work responsibilities. These words of Ms. Robless truly put a human face on the need for this legislation, and needing time like this can be difficult for the working people of our province when they don't have the security of knowing their employment, their means of providing for themselves and their family, is protected and is in fact secure. This bill could change that.

In those situations where parents are faced with a critically ill child, their attention and time must be focused on the family.

Our bill is for hard-working Ontarians struggling to balance their jobs and their care commitments.

In those most difficult, most trying and most tragic of situations where parents face the disappearance of a child or the death of a child as a probable result of crime, our proposed legislation reaches out and compassionately provides job-protected leaves for those who face these

painful times of personal crisis. No one should have to worry about being unemployed on top of struggling to deal with a medical crisis of a beloved family member or tragic situations involving our children. Because when hardship and tragedy strike, when the chips are down, you want to know that someone is there for you, that someone is watching your back.

This is an opportunity for government to show the compassion our citizens need and deserve in their time of need. This is the compassionate choice and the smart choice. Caregivers can suffer from incredible stress themselves. Many are taking care of both the children who have always needed them and the parents who have given them so much and now need their children's help. We need to help them by taking away the possibility that their job could be at risk for doing the right thing and putting family first. It is our way of telling Ontarians that we care like you care, that we'll help safeguard your means of making a living while you are fulfilling your obligation to your loved ones.

If passed, our proposed legislation would assist working people and the economy in other ways as well, because it will help protect and retain needed employees who might otherwise have to leave their employment or who might lose it. We know that keeping skilled labour is good for employers, employees and the overall Ontario economy alike. We know that skilled labour helps keep our province competitive, and that's important, especially in these times. Job-protected leave during periods of crisis is one thing we can do to keep our skilled labour force on the job. Whether in the high-tech or the construction industry, skilled employees are one of the important keys to a prosperous future for Ontario. Without the right skilled employees to do the job, the job will be done elsewhere, perhaps outside of our province. Keeping skilled workers here when they encounter the same family health crises we all face is a matter, then, of keeping our Ontario economy strong and secure. So it would make good economic sense to provide this caregiver leave, rather than see these skilled employees leave their employers.

0940

Speaker, I am confident that our proposed leaves are in the best interests of both workers and businesses, because we know that safe and fair workplaces are the building blocks of stronger communities and a stronger economy. Employers and business owners have families of their own, and Ontario business leaders know and can identify with their employees when a family member is sick or injured. In those cases, all these differences melt away and we are simply people looking after other people.

We are one Ontario. I really hope that we legislators, duly elected by the people of Ontario, as we debate this legislation, remember those stories in our communities, and I'm sure every single one of us may have a personal story or that of a member of our community. Perhaps we should remember all those stories as we debate this bill.

I really want to take this opportunity to thank all the members for supporting this bill. It has been a construct-

ive debate, it has been a good committee process, and I'm grateful to all members for supporting this bill. But I also ask them, as we wind down this legislative session—I think we've got three more weeks to go before we break for Christmas and the holidays—that it will be very much appreciated by our friends, our supporters who are here today, who I have met, who have told me how urgent the need is for this bill to pass for, most importantly, our family members in our communities, the parents, the children who need this job protection.

I really hope that we keep this debate and this legislation focused and see if we can get quick passage of this bill. I think we all will be doing the right thing. We all will be winners if this legislation becomes law by the end of the year. We will be doing what our constituents have asked us to do. We will be ensuring that much-needed, compassionate legislation is now law in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, I thank you very much for the time you've given me. I would now like to turn it over to my parliamentary assistant, the member from Brampton West.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Brampton West.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you to the minister for his remarks. Before I begin today, I'd like to thank all the people in the gallery for their advocacy and support, and especially for coming before the committee process and bringing your views and making them known to the committee. They were very much appreciated.

This bill is about making sure family members have the time they need to look after their loved ones and that their job is waiting for them when they return. Importantly, for many in our province, the proposed family caregiver leave would be taken to care for family members who live in other countries. The difficulty of arranging travel outside of Canada, and the added time this travel requires, can be an added burden for those trying to help seriously ill loved ones.

We know that many Ontarians were born outside of Canada. In the greater Toronto area, many of the people were born outside of Canada; that percentage is about half. The importance of having job-protected time to take care of family members with a serious medical condition is all the more important when distance, sometimes continents, separates us from those we care about and need to be with.

We have seen overwhelming support for this bill from families, from caregivers and from organizations across Ontario. Canadian Cancer Society vice-president Rowena Pinto said, "Bill 21 is welcome news for those who need to take leave from work to care for a loved one with cancer.... This legislation will allow families to concentrate on supporting their loved ones instead of worrying about losing their jobs." Ms. Pinto also explained that, "Cancer is more than a health issue. It is also a complex social issue. With approximately 22% of Canadians grappling with caregiving responsibilities for seriously ill family members, the physical, emotional and financial burden on caregivers is a veritable strain on many fam-

ilies." Madam Speaker, that is why we introduced this important proposed legislation.

We have received other supportive words of encouragement regarding this legislation. Ms. Sue VanderBent, executive director of the Ontario Home Care Association, has said, "Home care systems are dependent on the support of families and loved ones. For many, the caregiving responsibilities are intense, emotional and lengthy in duration, and the demands can result in absence from work. The Leaves to Help Families will provide family caregivers with peace of mind related to their employment. The members of the Ontario Home Care Association are hopeful that all parties will move quickly to pass this legislation."

Emanuel Carvalho, executive vice-president of health care for the Service Employees International Union said, "This legislation will provide urgently needed relief to overstretched families who are caring for a loved one while juggling responsibilities like work and raising children."

Mary Lewis, the executive director of mission of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario has said, "We are very pleased to support the Ontario government's proposed legislation, the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families), 2013, and congratulate the government on taking this important step to protect the job security of Ontarians caring for loved ones. The Heart and Stroke Foundation recognizes that the health and support of caregivers is a vital aspect in a person's recovery from heart disease and stroke. We look forward to working together to further support caregivers through our health and information programs, like Living with Heart Disease and Living with Stroke, in order to give Ontarians much-needed support when filling this role after a tragic event."

Lisa Levin, chair of the Ontario Caregiver Coalition, said in supporting this bill: "The Ontario Caregiver Coalition, a collaborative that works to advance the interests of caregivers, is pleased that our decision-makers are recognizing the important contributions made by caregivers. Based on national data, it is estimated that caregiving contributes between \$24 billion and \$31 billion annually to maintain the health of Canadians. Caregivers need our support to continue their critical role. This is the beginning of a broader dialogue on economic and social supports to help those who take care of their loved ones."

That is why the leaves in our bill—leaves for parents of critically ill children and of children who are missing or die where it is probably the result of a crime—are so important and so necessary. The leaves complement recently extended federal income supports by providing up to 37 weeks of job-protected leave to care for a critically ill child; up to 52 weeks of job-protected leave for employees who are parents of a child who has disappeared where it is probably the result of crime; and up to 104 weeks of job-protected leave for employees who are parents of a child who has died where it is probably the result of a crime.

Employees eligible for critically ill child care leave may also be entitled to federal employment insurance

benefits for most of their leave, while employees eligible for a crime-related child death or disappearance leave may be entitled to the Federal Income Support for Parents of Murdered or Missing Children grant. All parents can sympathize with other mothers and fathers who face these difficult and tragic situations.

Ontario currently provides a number of supports to parents who face crises. Ontario Victim Services, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, provides direct services to victims of crime across Ontario and funds community organizations that deliver support services to victims. The direct services include the Financial Assistance for Families of Homicide Victims Program. The Financial Assistance for Families of Homicide Victims Program helps eligible parents, whether biological or adoptive, and spouses of homicide victims by providing up to \$10,000 per homicide.

0950

The Vulnerable Victims and Family Fund helps victims of crime and families of homicide victims participate more fully in the criminal court process. Financial and court-based supports include helping both victims of crime and families of homicide victims to travel to attend court during key points in a criminal proceeding—for instance, a trial—and providing vulnerable victims with interpretive services when they're observing a criminal proceeding. Victims of crime and families of homicide victims would apply through Ontario's Victim/Witness Assistance Program, which is available in all 54 court jurisdictions.

Ontario also provides a variety of supportive services to parents of children who face a health crisis. The Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities program, which is managed by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, helps parents with some of the extra costs of caring for a child who has a severe disability. A parent or a legal guardian whose child is under 18 years of age, lives at home and has a severe disability may be eligible to receive help under this program, depending on the family's income. Parents can get between \$25 and \$440 a month to help with costs such as travel to doctors and hospitals, special shoes and clothes, parental relief, wheelchair repairs, assistive devices, hearing aids, hearing aid batteries, prescription drugs, dental care and eyeglasses.

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services funds two programs that can give families a break or respite from the day-to-day care of their child with special needs. Under the Out-of-Home Respite Program, families of children with multiple special needs can receive up to seven days of respite care provided in a location other than their home. The child must be under 18 years of age, have multiple special needs because of a physical or developmental disability, and live at home and need care 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

There is also enhanced respite funding. This grant is paid to families who are caring for a child who is medically fragile and/or depends on a technological device, needing care 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and is paid

in addition to other respite services. Families may be eligible for up to \$3,500 per child per year. The child must be under 18 years of age, live at home and need intensive care and constant monitoring on a 24-hour basis.

Our bill is for hard-working Ontarians struggling to balance their jobs and their care commitments. In the most difficult, most trying and most tragic of situations, where parents face the disappearance of a child or the death of a child as a probable result of crime, our proposed legislation reaches out and compassionately provides job-protected leave for those who face the painful times of personal crisis.

No one should have to worry about being unemployed on top of struggling to deal with the medical crisis of a beloved family member or a tragic situation involving our children, because when hardship and tragedy strike, when the chips are down, you want to know that someone is there for you, that someone is watching your back. This is an opportunity for government to show the compassion our citizens need and deserve in their time of need.

If passed, our legislation would assist working people and the economy in other ways as well, because it would help protect and retain needed employees who might otherwise have to leave their employment or who might lose it. We know that keeping skilled labour is good for employers, employees and the overall economy alike.

The Ontario Ministry of Finance projects a shortfall of employees ranging from 200,000 to 1.8 million by 2031. This is according to a study entitled *People Without Jobs, Jobs Without People*, by former Seneca College president Dr. Rick Miner.

Our government, Madam Speaker, has worked very hard to protect working Ontarians and families. Our Premier, Kathleen Wynne, and members of her cabinet have visited communities across the province, met with important partners inside and outside of government, and introduced a number of new initiatives and investments to get government working for the people of this province.

More than 475,000 jobs have been created since the recessionary low in 2009. Our province has invested more than \$85 billion in public infrastructure since 2003 to reverse the underinvestment that had accumulated over several previous decades. There are more than 100 hospital construction projects currently on the go, including in Thunder Bay, London and Cornwall. There are also more than 610 new schools that have been opened, planned or under construction across the province. Our finance minister, Charles Sousa, said in his recent economic statement that now is the right time to invest \$35 billion over the next three years in important infrastructure projects throughout the province and that these investments will help support and maintain more than 100,000 jobs annually.

We're investing in our infrastructure and we're also investing in the people of Ontario. This includes: 30% off the tuition grant for post-secondary education, which is helping more than 200,000 students; the youth jobs strategy, which will create 30,000 employment and mentorship opportunities for young people—since its launch just

over a month ago, 2,000 jobs have been created; and the first-ever grant program solely dedicated to seniors, which will help older Ontarians remain active, healthy and connected to the community.

To make the province more competitive and create jobs, our government is investing more than \$35 billion in infrastructure over the next three years. This will benefit all Ontarians in the near term and for generations to come, helping businesses compete and attract new job-creating investment to the province.

The government's plan to build modern infrastructure includes: becoming the first province to develop and market green bonds, helping fund green infrastructure projects, including public transit; the creation of a new Trillium Trust, a dedicated fund that would receive gains from asset sales, such as from the sale of the province's interest in General Motors, to finance key public infrastructure priorities; and ensuring opportunities for companies of various sizes to take part in projects led by Infrastructure Ontario through its world-leading alternative financing and procurement model.

The Ministry of Labour currently has a panel reviewing the minimum wage to help determine a method of setting it in the future so that it provides fairness and a meaningful opportunity to improve lives and provides predictability for business to help them remain competitive and create jobs.

And to build a fair, compassionate society, our government has introduced this legislation that would, if passed, create these three new categories of unpaid job-protected leave: family caregiver leave, a leave for parents of critically ill children, and a leave for parents of children who are missing or who died as a probable result of crime. We've introduced this bill so people can take care of their loved ones without fear of losing their employment. Our proposed legislation would provide reasonable protection for employers and employees alike. We have asked our federal counterparts to provide employment assistance to those who would be eligible for the family caregiver leave so that they could receive income during these difficult times.

If passed, this proposed legislation would be enforced by Ministry of Labour employment standards officers, who could step in if employees' rights are denied. I want to add that the strategies, tools and resources that we have over the past few years developed to successfully deal with employment standards claims give us an enhanced ability to enforce this proposed legislation, as well as other provisions of the Employment Standards Act.

This bill is for the young working family or single parent needing to care for their child in hospital with a serious medical condition. It is for the wife seeing her husband through a difficult period of radiation or chemotherapy. It is for someone helping to care for that elderly parent who is suffering major health problems as a result of a fall or the aftermath of a stroke.

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This proposed legislation is our way of saying to the people of this province that we will help protect you as

you protect your loved ones. Our proposed legislation would assist those Ontarians who are most vulnerable. That is because the burden of caregiving lies most heavily on those without the financial means to provide care. Our bill would help the immigrant family new to Canada already burdened with adapting to a new land. It would help single parents. It would assist single adult children caring for a seriously ill and elderly parent. It would also assist women, to whom, we all know, a disproportionate share of the responsibility of caring for family members still falls.

When we and those we love face these very difficult personal situations, the last thing we need is to fear being left unemployed because we need time away from work. Working Ontarians should not have to choose between their jobs and helping family members with major health problems. This is why our government introduced this bill. That is why we have taken this action for the working people of this province.

Another goal of our government, which I'm sure we all share, is to make Ontario the healthiest place in North America, both to grow up and to grow old in. We all know that across Canada we have an aging population. It is clear that this puts economic pressure on our health care system. So when the opportunity is there to help seniors facing a serious medical condition stay in their homes, where the financial cost to society is lower, we believe making that happen makes sense.

In conclusion, I just want to thank all three parties of the House for supporting this bill and for a smooth transition through committee, and as well, the stakeholders that are here who have given their support to this very important bill. I want to thank you for your support.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to also acknowledge and recognize and thank the members in the gallery who are paying attention to the one-hour lead on third reading of Bill 21, and the remarks by the minister as well as his parliamentary assistant from Brampton West.

Of course our critic, Monte McNaughton, will be doing a lead on this. I think it's worthwhile sticking around for that, which will probably occur the next time because of the time element left this morning.

There are really a couple of sections that are really worthwhile putting some attention to. We support the intent. We also want to recognize what it is. I think, really, that the first thing is that there is actually no money attached to this, so if people can afford to take time off in Ontario today—first, they're lucky to have a job in Ontario today. There are 300,000 families that don't have the job to leave in the first place.

Then, the fact is that they've sort of, for some malicious reason, said, "You must take the entire week. Even if it's taking your spouse to a chemotherapy treatment, you must take the week off." Then, if you look at section 52, if you try to go back to work the next day, it's at the wish of the employer. These provisions need to be looked at. I'm sure, in the drafting, in trying to find consent here, there isn't much attention being paid to it.

So subsection 49.3(1)—defining a “week” is deliberately mentioned in every section; it must be a week. Now I’ve been through personal experiences—most people have—with someone taking terminally ill treatments who may be in remission for periods of time. That section needs to be looked at, for sure.

Then again, there is no support here. There’s not one nickel. For a family that’s already suffering under paying the parking—going to the hospital, it costs 30 or 40 bucks a day for parking. They don’t have a job. I think they could go a little further in this in some respects.

I think also the other part is section 52 in the bill itself. I’ll just flip over—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The time has expired. Further comments or questions?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I think this bill is needed. We all agree that it is a step forward. Many families face illness and they need support. Our home care system—we’re working to improve that. We’ve brought a motion to try to get home care within five days when someone leaves the hospital, so that they can have that care they depend on. But also, family members, of course, want to be there when there’s some kind of serious illness going on, and sometimes they’re required to be there, if that home care isn’t delivered in those five days.

I understand that it went to committee, and there was really good discussion. Stakeholders brought their concerns with respect to the time off and the length of time that the member from Durham spoke about. They were very concerned with the week, that you must take that week off. They wanted to have the flexibility of maybe taking a day or having an afternoon.

We’re in a democratic government right now, as we know, and we’re in a minority government. In that committee, the work was done. It was done by the two parties. The NDP and the Conservatives agreed that those things should be looked at and be flexible, because it’s good for the employee and it’s also good for the employer. Sometimes employers don’t want to have that employee off for a whole week; it could disrupt their business.

The employee, then, can also have the benefit of not having that time off without pay, so maybe an afternoon could be better than a whole week. As the member from Durham said, people can’t afford to have a whole week off without pay. They have to pay their bills, and they’ve got to put the food on the table. Not everybody has that flexibility of having no paycheck for a week. So I really like that—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Your time has expired. The member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I’d like to thank the Minister of Labour very much for bringing this bill forward. I think it’s an important bill for Ontario families that are in a time of crisis. People need support. I think we all agree that this is an important piece of legislation. I’d also like to thank the member from Brampton West for his remarks.

Most of all, I would like to thank the members in the gallery today, most of whom came and presented to the committee, which helped to inform the deliberation and the clause-by-clause. They were very thoughtful presentations. They took the time to come; they are obviously very concerned about the people they represent in their various constituencies and in their roles. I’d like to thank them very much and thank them for being here today.

I would like to, I think, correct the record in regard to the remarks from the member from Durham.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, you can’t. You can only correct your own record.

Mr. John Fraser: Well, I would like to correct the member—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Okay. Carry on.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much. I apologize for my misstep.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Just trying to help you.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much for correcting me. I’m so glad I’ve got your help over there.

I do believe that the week—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: I know. We’re together like this.

In fact, that is not restricted to whole weeks; I think that went through committee. There was some discussion and debate. I know there was some concern about small businesses and their ability to accommodate that, but that passed.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: You abstained.

Mr. John Fraser: That’s correct. I do have some concerns about how that’s going to affect small businesses, but it did pass. I’ve actually had some discussions with some of the members who are here today.

Look, many of us have had an experience in our life where we’ve been in a crisis with a loved one. I know that I’ve had a few. We’re currently having one right now; my dad has a very, very serious illness. We’re lucky: I have three sisters—we have lots of kids that live in the city—and I’m here. But we’ve all got some flexibility because of our—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I’m going to have some time to speak to the third reading of this bill at some point further on, I believe, but I’m just going to go a little bit off the topic for a second.

I had only a brief opportunity yesterday to announce the arrival of our newest grandchild. Adelaide Helena Colucci was born at the Peterborough Regional Health Centre on Saturday, November 16, at 4:41 p.m., at 8 pounds, 13 ounces, and 21 inches long.

Tom and Emily—Emily, of course, is the mother, and our daughter—are doing extremely well. She was discharged from the hospital yesterday, and we had the opportunity, Vicky and I, to see Adelaide on my way to Toronto on Sunday. She is, of course, gorgeous, because not a bit of her takes after me. But we’re looking forward

to spending more time with her. And yesterday, on the 18th, another one of our granddaughters, May, turned six. She's in grade 1 at Eganville public school in Eganville. So family caregiver leave and talking about your family, I think, mesh very well.

As I said, I'm going to have the opportunity—I share many of the concerns that my colleague from Durham spoke about with regard to how, you know, it's a wonderful thought, the Family Caregiver Leave Act. There are some weaknesses in the legislation itself with regard to the time off and the blocks that it needs to be taken in. There are some concerns about that. Of course, the other thing is that it's a bit more of a wish list on the part of the provincial government, without attaching any monetary support whatsoever. That's an issue that I think still needs to be addressed, but it's not going to be addressed in my two seconds that I have—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The parliamentary assistant has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I want to thank the members from Durham, London West, Ottawa South and Renfrew.

Madam Speaker, this bill is the right thing to do. We need to extend compassion to people who are down on their luck, who need to care for their child, their parents or grandparents.

One of the most important elements of this bill really struck close to home for me because last Sunday I attended the funeral of a close friend's father, who was a Canadian citizen who was visiting abroad and had been misdiagnosed and got very ill. My friend was able to go and bring his father back. Luckily for them, they wouldn't have had to take time off from work, because they are in their own small business. But had it been someone who had a job and needed to do the same thing, it would have been very difficult, because the father really needed someone to accompany him back to Canada. It's an unfortunate thing that happened, but at least with this bill it can give family members some sort of comfort and relief to know that their job will be waiting for them after they have looked after their critically ill child or a parent.

I think this is a great bill. It extends compassion to people who are really in a very difficult situation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being close to 10:15 of the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have two great guests here from Northumberland—Quinte West this morning, in the west gallery. We have Kevin Burh and Kelly Cocek. It's great to see you here.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: I'm honoured to introduce Dominic Giroux, president of Laurentian University, and Michael Atkins, the chair of the board of governors for Laurentian University. I welcome them to their lobby day, and I know that they're going to have an excellent day.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'm pleased to introduce a couple of friends of mine, in the west gallery this morning: Mark Yacoub and Jeff Turner, who are visiting us from the United Kingdom.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to welcome guests joining us for question period in the public gallery this morning, from both of the two world-class universities in my riding of Kitchener—Waterloo. From Wilfrid Laurier University: Dr. Max Blouw, president, and Mr. Jamie Martin, chair of the board of governors. From the University of Waterloo: Dr. Feridun Hamdullahpur, president, and Mr. Murray Gamble, vice-chair of the board of governors. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like us to welcome the president of Brock University, Dr. Jack Lightstone, and Joe Robertson, the chair of the board of trustees, in the west gallery.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to introduce the best constituency staff in Ontario. I have Marlene Welsh, Trish Fifield, Whitney McWilliam, and with them, my two retired constit staff Penny Rice and Francine Melmer. Welcome to Toronto.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I want to introduce the best health care researcher ever, Miriam Barna, with her aunt Lisa Marson and her niece Marson Davies. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want to introduce two distinguished representatives from Lakehead University, here for lobby day: Mr. Rodney Hanley, provost and vice-president academic at Lakehead University; and also Cameron Clark, chair of the board of governors at Lakehead University and a former Deputy Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Welcome to both of you gentlemen.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to introduce to you, in the gallery, Sheona and Robert Kloostr, the owners of Happy at Home, a home care program in Orillia. They were representing Georgian College last night at the Premier's Awards, for Colleges Ontario.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I would like to introduce, from St. Lawrence College: Glenn Vollebregt, president, as well as Marc Schaefer, board chair; and from Queen's University: Alan Harrison, provost and vice-president academic, and Barb Palk, chair of the board of trustees.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is my pleasure to introduce one of eastern Ontario's newest 53-year-olds, Steve Clark. Happy birthday, Steve.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a great pleasure to introduce a number of folks with us today in our galleries. From Trent University, we have Steven Franklin, president, and Bryan Davies, vice-chair of the board of governors. From the University of Windsor, we have Alan Wildeman, president, and Jennifer Jones, chair of the board of

governors. From Brock University, we have Jack Lightstone, president, and Joe Robertson, chair of the board of trustees. From the Council of Ontario Universities, we have Jennifer Grass, senior director of communications and public affairs.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Today I would like to introduce Dr. Michael DeGagné, the president of Nipissing University in North Bay; Colin Dennis, chair of the board of governors of Nipissing University; Harley d'Entremont, vice-president academic and research at Nipissing University; and Mr. George Burton, president of Canadore College in North Bay.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'd like to welcome from my alma mater Patrick Deane, president of McMaster University, and David Lazzarato, chair of the board of governors, who are here for university day. I hope the chamber all welcomes them.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: November is Adoption Awareness Month, and I would like to welcome Pat Convery and Wendy Hayes from the Adoption Council of Ontario for that; as well, I don't see them here yet, but Dr. Wildeman, president of the University of Windsor, and Jennifer Jones, the chair.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to welcome—they're not here yet—the students of the grade 5 class from Elma Township Public School in my riding of Perth—Wellington.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to welcome all the visitors who are here today for university day, especially the president and CEO of the Council of Ontario Universities, Bonnie Patterson, as well as Bob Lopinski, the principal of Counsel Public Affairs.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to the House, from York University, Mamdouh Shoukri, the president, and Julia Foster, the chair of the board of governors.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Joining us shortly is Sheldon Levy, president of Ryerson; Phyllis Yaffe, the chair of the board; and Erin McGinn, who are great city builders in my community. I want to welcome them.

I also want to welcome, Mr. Speaker, my friend Jack Lightstone, president of Brock University, who was a visionary professor, and I am the result of his great labours.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to introduce Dr. Alastair Summerlee, who's the president of the University of Guelph. I think he's still on his way in, but I know he's here because I've already met with him this morning.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I probably could have saved us time this morning by introducing everybody at the same time, but this morning I'd like to welcome President Bonnie Patterson and the entire Council of Ontario Universities, as well as Linda Franklin and representatives here joining us from Colleges Ontario. I wish all the members good meetings throughout the day with our post-secondary colleagues.

Mr. Mike Colle: I have the pleasure of introducing the aunt of the page from Eglinton—Lawrence, Cynthia White. Her wonderful aunt came all the way to Queen's Park to see her niece in action. Welcome, Elena Floros.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: It is my pleasure to welcome to the Legislature Arpana Vora and father, Adesh Vora, and friend Maddy Reid—for page Niam Vora—who are joining us today. I hope you have a wonderful time in the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Did I miss somebody? The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Ça me fait plaisir de vous présenter Carole Beaulieu, de OCAD, qui était ma chef de cabinet pour plusieurs années, et elle me manque beaucoup. Bienvenue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would be remiss if I didn't have my two cents' worth in recognizing Max Blouw, the president of Laurier, who happens to be the president of Laurier Brantford as well. So welcome, Max. We're glad you're here.

We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a delegation of the American state legislators from the Midwestern Legislative Conference. With us today we have Representative Jim Stamas from Michigan, Representative Tom Letson from Ohio, Representative Eric Genrich from Wisconsin, Representative Rob VerHeulen from Michigan and his wife, Norma, and we have Ilene Grossman, the assistant director of CSG-MLC.

Also with us today is Mary Lynn Becker of the Canadian consulate in Detroit. Her partner in crime, Jim Dickmeyer, the US Consul General, is not here with us, but he was with us yesterday. Welcome to our guests from the United States.

1040

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As is the custom and tradition, it is now time to welcome—all members will join me in welcoming—this new group of pages, serving in the second session of the 40th Parliament. Could you please assemble, pages?

Morgan Beatty from Prince Edward—Hastings; Julia Brunet from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex; Ana Chu Wong from York West; Amy Falkner from Ottawa Centre; Sarah Giesen from London—Fanshawe; Najat Halane from Ajax—Pickering; Jeffrey Howson from Wellington—Halton Hills; Spencer Johnne from Mississauga—Erindale; Michaela Knechtel from Perth—Wellington; Arvind Krishendeholl from Brampton West; Yong Da Li from Don Valley East; Maya Joy Louise Parkins-Lindstrom from Davenport; Zachary Piette from London West; William Randall from Don Valley West; Payton Smith from Northumberland—Quinte West; Marina St. Marseille from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry; Niam Vora from Etobicoke Centre; Matteya Wendling from Welland; Cynthia White from Eglinton—Lawrence; and Jonathan Arta Yapeter from Oak Ridges—Markham.

These are your pages.

Applause.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question for the Premier: Premier, the current law requires you to produce a detailed financial report about the province's books before an election campaign—finances, expenses, the debt, growth projections. But there is a loophole in that law that, as it's written, in a minority situation—so if there's an election next—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —that report would not come before the taxpayers of the province of Ontario.

Premier, you said you want to be open and transparent. I don't think you meant that ironically. Will you be good to your word and actually support closing that loophole?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I love it when the opposition has an epiphany. In 2003, we introduced the financial transparency and accountability act, one of the first pieces of legislation that we introduced. As it happens, the Conservatives voted against that. We absolutely believe that it's important that people have the information as we go into an election. We put that in place to address a \$5.6-billion deficit that had not been revealed before the election. So we believed that it was very necessary that we have that piece of legislation in place.

I have said repeatedly, since that day forward, that we are committed to that kind of openness and transparency. We're very glad that the Leader of the Opposition has seen the light on this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, I guess that's the answer I expected. I was hoping for a clearer "yes" though, Premier. I hope that you're not wiggling here—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We're going to start right off the bat: Stop. I'll go into individual ridings now.

Leader?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I hope you're not trying to wiggle off the hook here with some misdirection. I hope you can give me a straight-up answer on this. Basically, this would be a financial report that the Auditor General would sign off on. So during an election campaign, potentially in the spring, taxpayers would know the true state of the books, signed off by the Auditor General.

When you crafted your legislation, you cleverly left in a loophole that gets you off the hook. I want to commend the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, Laurie Scott, who has caught you on this, and she has brought forward a private member's bill that will be debated on Thursday.

So my very simple question to you, Premier, is, will you and the Liberal caucus support Laurie Scott's bill and close the Liberal loophole?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have said all along that we'll continue to look for new and important ways to provide more transparency and openness. As with all private members' bills, we'll listen to the debate. I haven't seen the legislation; I don't know exactly what it encompasses. I look forward to the debate.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would just ask the Leader of the Opposition to remember that it was our government that introduced the legislation in the first place. We brought in the legislation, because there was a \$5.6-billion deficit that had been hidden from the people of Ontario when we came into office in 2003.

Of course we're going to look for new ways. We're happy to have passed legislation to bring in the Financial Accountability Officer. We're the first provincial government in Ontario to have that oversight measure. Of course we'll be looking for new ways to be transparent. I look forward to the debate on the private member's bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, Premier, it's pretty straightforward. If you're looking for new ways to ensure transparency, it's kind of staring you right in the face, two desks behind me: Laurie Scott's bill. She brought it forward. She would close the Liberal loophole, and she would compel the finance minister, then, to put the true state of the books before the province in an election campaign, and the Auditor General would sign off on them. I mean, what's wrong with that? I don't understand why you're resisting closing the Liberal loophole here.

You know, Premier, that when Don Drummond looked at your books, he discovered that you're actually heading towards a \$30-billion deficit, that you're taking the province to tripling our provincial debt. So we don't really believe—we're going to take, with a few grains of salt, what the finance minister says. We actually want to see the Auditor General sign off on the books before a spring election campaign.

Will you close the loophole? Do the right thing. Support—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General discovered that we're the only government that has in fact reduced spending year over year. We have overachieved on our deficit reduction every single year.

I am happy to look at the private member's bill that the member is bringing forward. I'm happy to listen to the debate. As I said, we haven't seen the details. We haven't looked at what the legislation actually—what the implications would be.

But we introduced the legislation in the first place. We said that it was important that, before an election, people in the province know what is in the province's books. We did that because there was a \$5.6-billion deficit that had been hidden when the previous government was in office, before the 2003 election. We said that shouldn't happen again.

Of course we're willing to look at the private member's bill. We look forward to the debate, and I'm glad that the Leader of the Opposition finally sees that this is an important path to be on.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

New question.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: I'm not sure, while the Premier is dancing around and avoiding answering a simple yes-or-no question—she says that maybe she has not been briefed on the bill. If you're not, we hope we get an answer as soon as possible, because, clearly—I don't know how anybody can argue with this. It closes a Liberal loophole. It would force the finance minister to put the true state of the books before the province, signed off on by the Auditor General. It seems very straightforward. I don't know why they're resisting on this.

Well, maybe I have one idea, I guess. In your economic statement that you put out two weeks ago, as Vic Fedeli pointed out in his Fedeli Focus on Finance, your medium-term outlook numbers are absent. You don't actually show how you get to a balanced budget. This stuff is actually pleasure reading for me, Speaker. I actually enjoy reading these reports. But they were totally blank, the pages that show what you're going to do for spending in the medium term. You ripped those pages out. It's like saying the ending of a story and ripping out all the chapters. Why are you hiding information? What are you keeping from the public?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I've said, we are looking forward to the debate on the private member's bill, Mr. Speaker. Unlike the Leader of the Opposition, who will vote against a budget before he has read it, I am not going to commit to voting for legislation before I have read it and before I have heard the debate.

1050

I believe that this place works best when we have the opportunity to hear people's perspectives and to hear what the implications of a particular piece of legislation would be, just as I believe that it's important to read a budget before you decide whether you're going to vote against it or not.

So we're going to read the legislation. We're going to listen to the debate, Mr. Speaker. We're going to look at the implications. But I would just say that we brought in legislation in order to deal with the issues around transparency. We did that when we were first elected because

of a deficit that had been hidden. We are consistently looking for new ways to be transparent, and we look forward to the debate on this private member's bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, respectfully, Premier, this legislation was tabled two weeks ago. I would fully expect that you've been briefed on it. Your finance minister surely is aware of this bill. I imagine he's got to be 100% supportive. I don't see how you can argue with it. If you do agree with Laurie Scott's bill, because we are 100% behind that bill to close the Liberal loophole, then I'd ask you also to produce what's missing from the financial economic statement.

It puzzles me what you're trying to hide. My background is in economics. That's what gives me this scintillating personality and charming sense of humour. But I actually do read these things. Imagine my disappointment when that outlook was missing from your financial economic statement. It makes me wonder, number one, is the deficit even worse than you say? Are you going to raise taxes, number two? And does this mean you have no clue whatsoever how to get us out of the hole you've dug us in—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I find it passing strange that the member opposite and all of his friends there are talking about transparency and accountability, transparency and accountability that this government has brought to this House well before they decided to flirt with the idea. In fact, if they read the budget, from pages 143 to 148 we spoke at length about the new measures of accountability, including post-secondary education, child welfare, community-based mental health, consumer agencies, the tax credit system, and of course the introduction of a Financial Accountability Officer who would have powers well beyond those being brought forward by the private member's bill.

They, sir, voted against those very measures, and now they've decided that they want to come forward with amendments to a measure that they never even read, Mr. Speaker.

We will continue to do our part and bring that transparency and accountability to this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The finance minister says that there's a new level of transparency. Well, I look forward to seeing what the OPP have to say after they've investigated their office over the gas plant scandal. Come on. Not one but two OPP investigations: That takes some doing.

I'll ask the finance minister, because I know he's been briefed on this; I know he's on top of his files. It was tabled two weeks ago. And I know someday soon he's

going to be moving beyond talking points and actually proving that he's got this file under control. So I'll ask him, if I don't get an answer from the Premier: Will you agree to Laurie Scott's bill? Will you close the Liberal loophole? Will you put before the people of Ontario the true state of the finances, signed off by the Auditor General, in time for a spring election campaign?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't ask for quiet so that it can ramp back up again.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the province of Ontario, this government, is the first government and the first province in Canada to introduce a Financial Accountability Officer to maintain integrity in our numbers. We introduced interim reports illustrating that we cut spending even again last quarter. The Auditor General has audited our books, and it showed that the province of Ontario took determined and disciplined measures to reduce spending as well as control spending for the last four years running.

We recognize the challenges before us. We recognize that the world market has continued to slow, and yet Ontario has consistently exceeded its targets because of the measures and the directions that we have taken. We'll continue to do that. We'll continue to do what's necessary for the benefit of Ontarians and for growing our economy.

And I say to the member opposite, who stood in this House in 2003, before the \$5.6-billion hidden deficit, and said this—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Charles Sousa:—"The provincial budget"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. You're not going to get to say it.

New question.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Over three years ago, New Democrats proposed targeted tax credits to reward companies when they put people to work in the province of Ontario. Now, thousands of job losses later, the government has committed to studying the idea. How many more jobs will be lost while the government does that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the leader of the third party knows that we are putting in place measures that will invest in people and infrastructure, and will create an environment that will allow businesses to thrive. We have said that there are a series of tax credits in place that have supported business, and we need to look at those. We need to make sure that the business tax credits that are in place are working and that they are having the desired effects—making sure that we look at those. I think the notion that somehow there shouldn't be those

kinds of supports in place does not make sense, so we're looking at them to make sure that the ones that are there are actually having the desired effect of creating jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Before the last budget, the government also said that they would take action to close new corporate tax loopholes that would hand Ontario's biggest businesses a tax break—not when they create jobs, mind you, but when they wine and dine clients or buy box seats at the SkyDome. Has the government closed that loophole?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Finance has spoken to this a number of times and is working with the federal government on some of the specifics, but I think the bottom line is that we need to make sure that we have the right supports in place for business, including the supports that would help small business with their payroll tax, which is why we want to get the small businesses act passed. We want to make sure that the right supports are there so that businesses can expand and, at the same time, make sure that we put the supports for young people in place.

It's very heartening that the post-secondary institutions today are going to be talking to members about what they are doing to work with young people and make sure that the supports and the programs that are in place in the colleges and universities are preparing young people for the jobs that are available, because we know that we've got jobs and we know that we've got young people who are looking for those jobs. We need to make sure that those are linked together.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What the Premier may not realize is that for people losing jobs, this is pretty concerning stuff. The Liberal government plows forward with an HST giveaway that rewards companies for hitting the town, but for some reason the Premier seems to think she needs to hold more conversation and more consultation before she moves forward with proven tools that have helped provinces like Manitoba become the shining star of Canada's recovery.

Can the Premier explain why proven tax measures go to the back of the line while tax measures that help well-connected insiders and cost Ontarians billions and billions of dollars are the Premier's top priority?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Maybe in that exchange, the leader of the third party would explain why she's not going to work with us to get the small businesses act passed, because that will actually help small businesses with their payroll taxes and it would actually help 60,000 small businesses in Ontario. I hope that when the leader of the third party talks about targeted tax measures, she would work with us on that one.

I agree with her that we need to work with the federal government on some of the issues that the Minister of Finance has raised in conversation with the federal government. But there are issues before this House, like the small businesses act, for which we could use the support

of the NDP to make sure that that gets passed and we give those supports to our small businesses in the province.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals should stop playing political games, and things would move forward a lot more cleanly.

My next question is to the Premier. In communities across Ontario, people who rely on gaming to provide good jobs are wondering what the government's plan is doing to their industry. Last year, the government plowed ahead with a plan to bring new private casinos to cities like Toronto and push aside horse racing and the people who rely on it. Now the people of Toronto and people in communities across Ontario, in fact, have said they don't want a casino. Even the Premier has admitted that she doesn't believe that the Liberals got the horse racing initiative right.

What's the government's plan now, Speaker?

1100

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, there are a number of issues in that question, so I'm going to talk about what is happening. We have been very clear that the integration of horse racing into the gaming plan overall is very important. In fact, it's part of that five-year plan going forward. We're investing \$400 million in the horse racing industry. That has introduced stability into the horse racing industry. There is a sustainable future for horse racing in the province, which really was not in place when I took this office. The reality of having the integration of horse racing into the overall gaming strategy has happened. That's part of the plan.

In terms of municipalities' ability to choose whether to have a casino or not, that has always been the case, and that will continue to be the case.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, here's the reality: The government's plan to push new private casinos isn't working, and it's putting communities that rely on gaming, like Niagara Falls and Fort Erie, for example, at economic risk.

The Premier has admitted that the Liberal government didn't get this right. Why is the government upping the ante on a hand that everyone knows is a loser?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think what we've done is we have put in place a strategy that is going to allow the horse racing industry and the gaming industry to work together, to make sure that this industry overall is able to be responsible and sustainable. There are obviously issues around problem gambling that have to be addressed. There are issues around some communities wanting to have casinos and others not.

But that is why it's important that we have an integrated industry, so that horse racing can be part of the overall strategy. It's why there's a new board at OLG. It's why we've got a new strategy in place to make investments over the next five years and to make sure that the horse

racing industry is attached to gaming so that we can make decisions that are rational for communities and for the whole industry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the net result of the Premier's OLG privatization scheme is that rural families across Ontario have been thrown into chaos, and regions like Niagara, which have already been hit hard by job losses, feel like they're being clobbered by their own government. The government could have addressed problems in the Slots at Racetracks Program, but instead, they chose to put private casinos' interests ahead of tens of thousands of rural families.

The Premier isn't holding any aces, and Ontarians are calling her bluff. Will she reinstate the Slots at Racetracks profit-sharing program until we can reach a sustainable solution?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just get this straight: The leader of the third party wants to reinstate a program that was bad policy, that was not transparent, that was not working for the bulk of the province, and that was not providing a sustainable and open process and open program in horse racing. Repeated reports looked at that. Back to 2008, there was a report that said this is not a program that is transparent; it is not clear how it can work in a way that is fair across the system. That's the program that the leader of the third party wants to put back in place.

Well, we're not going to do that. We're putting in place a program that's going to focus on the customer, that's going to be sustainable and that's going to provide a future for horse racing. It's going to be integrated with gaming across the province. That's the plan we've got.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Premier. Back on October 21 of this year, you wrote an open letter on the ontario.ca website, titled "Let's Open Up Government to New Possibilities." In this letter, you state to the Ontario people, "Our Open Government Initiative will help create the transparent, accessible government that the people of Ontario deserve."

Two weeks ago, I introduced my private member's bill, the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Amendment Act (Pre-Election Reports), which will put into legislation that the government must release a pre-election financial report no later than 30 days after the minister moves the budget motion in the year, or within seven days after a writ is dropped for a non-fixed election.

Premier, I'm doing your work for you. Will you support my bill and let voters know our financial situation before they go to the polls?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I commend the member opposite for looking at the legislation that we brought in when we came into office and patterning her private member's bill on that work that we did. I commend her.

I have said that we are very interested in looking at the private member's bill. We are interested in hearing the debate, and we are looking for ways to be more open and transparent, so we look forward to the debate. As I said earlier, unlike the party opposite, we're going to read the legislation and listen to the debate before we make that decision, but we look forward to that debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Well, I did bring in the bill two weeks ago. You claim your government—how accountable it is. This could be a major plus for your government. I'm giving you an opportunity.

But let me list your history in transparency: billion-dollar gas plant scandals; your Ministry of Health is rife with scandals—Ornge and eHealth; there are two OPP investigations going on. That's your record of transparency, so I'm giving you a chance to support a bill that would provide transparency and tell the people of Ontario the state of the province's finances before they go to the polls.

Will you come back on Thursday for private members' bills and support this bill, which will help all of us—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the member opposite's private member's bill and her contribution to this debate, and I can appreciate why you're doing it, because the Premier of the day in 2003 said this: "We are not running a deficit." The finance minister of the day said, "I'm pleased" that we have a "fifth consecutive balanced budget." Tim Hudak—I'm sorry, a member of the cabinet—said that the "provincial budget has been balanced...." He said that on October 1, 2003.

I appreciate why you don't trust the members on your side of the House. We will do our part. We have introduced a Financial Accountability Officer. We have our statements audited. We are presenting our books in advance and will continue to do so.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please. Order. It's very difficult to ask for order when the answer is being given and I'm hearing more noise from the side that's giving the answer. For those that are heckling on the other side, it balances off so that no one can hear, so I'd appreciate a little refraining.

New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Yester-

day, we learned that the tragic deaths of four Ornge employees last May in Moosonee was as a result of the organization's failure when it comes to safety and training. This revelation is deeply distressing, especially given the fact that Ornge has been under the microscope for such a long time, and the government has assured us time and time again that all is good at Ornge now.

Can the minister explain to Ontarians how things could have gone so wrong yet again?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: There is no question that the terrible tragedy of the helicopter crash on May 31 was devastating, both personally and for the Ornge organization. They have taken action. They have responded already to many of the recommendations made by HRSDC, and I know that they are continuing to work with HRSDC to ensure that all of the directions are, in fact, implemented.

I think it's fair to say that under the new leadership at Ornge, Dr. Andy McCallum, his board and his senior leadership team have put the highest priority on patient safety and on the safety of their employees. I think that it would be important to note steps that have already been taken, and I look forward to the supplementary, where I will go over some of those reforms.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Too many aspects of what went wrong in Moosonee on May 31 seem like they carried over from the minister's failures to oversee Ornge. Months before the crash, a safety officer in Moosonee warned about the risk of green pilots and night flights, but tragically, this whistle-blower, like many like him before, seems to have been ignored. As a result, four people lost their lives and three beautiful children in my riding are without their dads.

This government can talk a good game about oversight, but if it does not include basic safety standards, it's for none. Will the minister admit that she has yet again failed Ontarians?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: In the words of the member from Nickel Belt, she has indeed said herself, speaking to the people at Ornge, "You give us confidence that strong elements of oversight are now there. You guys are a part of this. Your job is to oversee. You know how to do your job. You're dedicated to it, and it brings results.... Things have changed for the good of the people of Ontario." That was in May, and I believe that the member opposite was correct in her observation.

Some of the steps that have been taken since May 31: additional training for helicopter pilots, including controlled flight into terrain; they've revised their operating procedures for night operations, including operations into black-hole sites; and they're installing solar lighting pads at 91 helipads across the province, including the north, to assist pilots landing at night.

There are others, Speaker. I will go until you—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Am I out of time?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You are. Thank you.

New question.

ADOPTION

Mr. Vic Dhillon: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

We're all aware of the challenges faced by crown wards. It can be very difficult growing up in these circumstances. In my community, there are many parents who would like to build families through adoption. Adoption provides a great way for crown wards to find permanent, loving homes. Unfortunately, the adoption process can be very time-consuming and stressful for families.

Minister, can you tell us what our government is doing to make the adoption process easier so more families consider adoption when building a family?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you to the member from Brampton West for his question. As I said earlier, November is Adoption Awareness Month, and welcome to the Adoption Council of Ontario, who is here today.

We of course want Ontario to be the best place in Canada for families. This includes increasing the number of children growing up in permanent homes through adoption and legal custody. Through reforms and regulatory changes, we have improved the adoption process for families in Ontario. We've removed barriers to adoption and made it easier for prospective parents to adopt a child, provide permanent homes for more crown wards and prepare youth for adulthood.

I would encourage all families looking to adopt to visit the MCYS website. The website provides helpful tips and advice on how to navigate our adoption system.

We will continue to help families who would like to adopt and assist more children to join safe, loving and permanent families.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you very much, Minister. I'm glad to see that we have taken action to improve the adoption process in Ontario and that, through legislative changes, we are helping families and youth throughout the province. I'm hopeful that families will take advantage of the helpful advice posted on the ministry's website.

Another thing I hear from my community is that many older crown wards are passed over for adoption. It's important that we help these youth find permanent homes of their own. It's my understanding that a barrier to their adoption is that the process can be quite costly for prospective families.

Minister, what's our government doing to encourage the adoption of older crown wards?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you again for the supplementary. We recognize as well that there are often challenges to placing older children and siblings in permanent homes. One of the factors that was just raised is the cost associated with adoption.

That's why we took action to help these youth by making adoption easier for prospective families. Last year we introduced an adoption subsidy for families who adopt children over the age of 10. The subsidy provides financial support of \$11,400 per year per child. The subsidy offers great assistance to families who would like to adopt, but face financial barriers. Through this subsidy, 110 children have already found permanent homes, and it's expected that by the end of the year, 150 more children will be adopted.

These changes improve the lives of children in care and ensure that more children are placed in safe, loving and permanent homes and, more importantly, families.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Then to the Minister of Health. Minister, I think you agree with me that the people of south Niagara deserve a modern, state-of-the-art hospital. You appointed Kevin Smith to be the supervisor of the Niagara Health System. I don't agree with all of your decisions, but I think Kevin Smith has done a terrific job. As you know, he pointed out that a south Niagara hospital, as opposed to maintaining the four existing sites, would save the taxpayer \$285 million in capital, and then you'd have a \$10-million savings in operating from lower admin expenses that you could put to attracting more nurses and more specialists. I think all of us agree that this is the way to go.

The next step, as you know, Minister, is a planning grant to allow the folks at the Niagara Health System to then decide where the services are going to go and how they're going to build that new hospital. I ask you, Minister, will you green-light this? Will you grant them the authority and give them the planning grant to go the next step for this needed hospital?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'd like to thank the member opposite for acknowledging the extraordinarily fine work that Dr. Kevin Smith has done at the Niagara Health System. As he well knows, it was a difficult challenge when Dr. Smith was appointed supervisor, but I think there is an overwhelmingly strong consensus that he has done a great job and really put that hospital on a much stronger footing.

The member opposite does raise the issue of a capital request for a new hospital in south Niagara. It is something that we are looking at carefully. Of course, it does come with the closure of other hospitals. As Dr. Smith said, we would close five hospitals to build one new one. That is not an easy decision for a community to make. I'd like some clarity from the member opposite whether he would support that plan as described by Dr. Smith.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think I've been very clear about that, actually. I said you should carry out Dr. Smith's recommendations and do it now. What's not to like about this? It actually saves money. It actually means you have

savings you could put towards attracting new nurses who are run off their feet today. So what's not to like with this proposal? It saves taxpayers' money and it raises the bar when it comes to standards.

I will caution you to ignore the NDP's approach. Initially, they wanted the site to be in Welland. Then there was a by-election, so they said, "Well, we also want it to be in Niagara Falls." They said, "Well, keep them all open." They want to have their cake and eat it too. Nobody takes that NDP way seriously. I think Dr. Smith has made the right recommendation.

So the question is this: The planning grant is the next step. You did authorize that for Windsor in a similar situation where they consolidated in Windsor from two sites down to one. I don't know why you did it for Windsor but you're not doing it for Niagara. I'll ask you, will you say yes to the planning grant to allow the work to happen?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Tim Hudak: We want to see that new hospital at the Lyons Creek Road site in Niagara Falls. Why don't you?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I say, Speaker, I am delighted with the conversion of the Leader of the Opposition to actually believing that investing in capital infrastructure, investing in hospitals, is the right thing to do. You will recall that just a year and a bit ago, when our budget included the plans for building new hospitals, the Leader of the Opposition voted against that. He voted against building new hospitals, many of them in communities represented by members of his own party. So I'm delighted he has changed his mind. I'm delighted that he sees that capital infrastructure, building hospitals, investing in that infrastructure, is the right thing to be doing.

So we're continuing to build new hospitals. We think it's the right thing to do and we're looking very carefully at this particular project.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the minister responsible for the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Since December of last year, the government has known that 70% of Ontario's private companies are not complying with the AODA reporting requirements. To make matters worse, this information was only discovered after the AODA Alliance spent months battling with this government to release its compliance data, information that should always have been publicly available.

1120

The minister tells us now that he is "upset" about the lack of compliance, but can he explain to Ontarians why his government's lack of enforcement had to show up in the Toronto Star for him to finally promise action?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question, as I spoke to this yesterday. I want to repeat that the compliance levels by businesses that have more than 20 employ-

ees and were required to file by December 31 of last year—that percentage is unacceptably low. Only 30% of the businesses in this province have complied.

Since becoming minister, I've taken this issue extremely seriously. During my tenure as minister and minister responsible for the AODA, we have doubled the number of businesses that now are complying. In September, I asked the ministry and they sent out more than 50,000 letters; 2,500 enforcement letters are going out this week, Mr. Speaker. This is an issue that I take very seriously.

To some extent, unfortunately, I have to admit that in the AODA legislation itself, as was passed unanimously by this Legislature, the mechanism for enforcement is in some respects cumbersome in terms of the process that we have to follow. For that reason, we are following the process as outlined in the law, but I am working on this vigorously. I intend to go as far as we need to to get full compliance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Speaker, this 2005 legislation is an essential tool for ensuring equal access for persons with disabilities in Ontario, but it can only be effective if the standards are enforced, which is up to this government. Even more outrageous, the government earmarked \$24 million to enforce the act, but they never bothered to spend any of it.

Instead of platitudes and empty promises, can the minister provide Ontarians with a concrete timeline—what you're actually going to do—for enforcing the AODA, finally?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, I think it's important. There are two issues I want to reference. First of all, we didn't have an opportunity to enforce a customer service standard until this year. The requirement for businesses to comply was December 31. Since the beginning of this year, we have sent out two letters to all the businesses across this province, more than 50,000 in September alone. I'm following up with 2,500 enforcement letters. We also have a marketing plan that we're launching as well.

I want to say, because this is important, on the positive side as well, many businesses have complied. But we have 100% compliance for this act as well as for this standard in the entire Ontario public service and the agencies this government is responsible for.

We are working on this vigorously, and I'm prepared, if necessary, to issue further enforcement letters, including fines, until businesses comply.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, the Honourable Brad Duguid.

Speaker, as the MPP for Etobicoke North, I have many college-aged students who attend, of course, vari-

ous institutions, many of whom are seeking quality training in French. I've also noticed that many francophone students travel far and wide for the great opportunities available at GTA colleges.

When choosing an area for higher study, francophone students across the province deserve fair and equitable access to quality post-secondary education. Such students should be able to choose to study in their area of interest and rest assured that they will have options. Yet, unfortunately, still to this day, they are often limited in those very choices.

Speaker, can the minister please tell the House what the government is doing to create more opportunities for post-secondary students wishing to study in French?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Merci beaucoup pour votre question. Ensuring that francophone students have better access to French-language programs is a key priority for our government. On October 24, Mr. Speaker, our government announced an action plan to increase access to French-language post-secondary education, particularly services in central and southwestern Ontario. We'll be committing \$16.5 million to help universities and colleges expand their French-language programs, including expansions that are already under way at York University's Glendon College, Collège Boréal and La Cité collégiale. We've also expanded distance grants for students.

But I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge the work of our minister of francophone affairs. She's been a passionate champion for our francophone community and post-secondary issues. I've had the honour of being able to announce these initiatives, but it's the minister of francophone affairs who's really championed them within our government. She's the one that deserves the credit, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M. Shafiq Qadri: Je me réjouis du fait que le gouvernement rend plus accessible l'éducation post-secondaire en français au centre-sud de la province en augmentant l'offre existante. Les étudiants postsecondaires de ma circonscription me disent que vos investissements permettront aux institutions postsecondaires d'élargir les programmes en langue française en communications, pharmacie, soins dentaires, droit, commerce, relations publiques, journalisme et biologie, pour en nommer quelques-uns.

Le ministre pourrait-il nous dire ce que ce plan signifie pour la communauté francophone de l'Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think I'd best refer this to the minister of francophone affairs.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci au ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités pour ses beaux commentaires. Merci au député d'Etobicoke North.

Ce plan d'action a une importance bien particulière parce que d'ici 2020, 50 % des francophones vont vivre ici au centre et au sud-ouest de l'Ontario. Alors, nous augmentons les programmes avec un financement additionnel de 14,5 millions de dollars et en encourageant la collaboration entre les institutions.

Nous créons un comité consultatif qui commencera dans les prochains mois, avant l'échéancier du printemps 2014. Nous allons aussi revoir la capacité de Glendon à jouer un rôle beaucoup plus important, et nous discutons avec l'Université York pour parler de la gouvernance au collège.

C'est de la musique à mes oreilles que l'Université York veuille demander la désignation de leur université sous la Loi sur les services en français. Merci.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Good morning. My question is to the Acting Premier. Last week, in an unprecedented event, the elite anti-rackets squad of the OPP took an after-hours tour of the Premier's office. It was described as a crime scene because some in this government destroyed documents so no one would find out about a \$1.1-billion scandal.

We have asked for a debate and a vote on a non-confidence motion, and we have asked for a judicial inquiry into this \$1.1-billion scandal. The Liberal government has refused on both occasions.

Would the Acting Premier please explain to this House why she thinks the Premier can maintain the confidence of the people of Ontario, now that the OPP have directly been engaged in her office?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think that our Premier has done an extraordinary job in being open and transparent. From the moment she became Premier of this province, she indicated that she would be open, she would be transparent, and that she would continue to cooperate fully in any effort to gather information.

She wrote to the Auditor General. She re-struck the committee. She provided 186,000 pages, including 30,000 from the Premier's office. The committee heard from 70 witnesses during more than 100 hours. All documents were released; the opposition voted against that, strangely enough. The Premier appeared at the committee in April. She's coming back on December 3. She has accepted responsibility as a member of cabinet.

Speaker, I think our Premier has done everything possible to make sure that people get the information they need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Back to the Acting Premier: Does this sound transparent to you? Your government broke the law. Your government told this House on several occasions that the cancellation was only \$40 million, when instead you knew for as many as two years that it was over \$700 million. You obstructed the Information and Privacy Commissioner and destroyed official government documents.

At what point does that government not go to the people to seek a mandate because they have lost the trust of the people of Ontario? Will you call an election and seek a mandate from the people of this province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: First of all, the member should be very, very careful, I think, with her language.

But there's a broader issue here, and that is that she can't ignore the fact, as she tries to, day after day, that it was the Progressive Conservative Party that went from door to door in those ridings involved with the gas plant and said the only way to see them cancelled was to vote for the Progressive Conservatives.

It was the leader of her party who stood up at a press conference, which is available on YouTube, and said that if he was elected Premier, the gas plant would be "done, done, done." It was their party that went into the last election promising, through robocalls, through press releases, through tweets and through door-to-door pamphlets, that the only way to get rid of the gas plants was to have them form the government.

1130

It's time they came clean with their analysis, their costing and their—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

SECURITY AT CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Earlier this month we learned of the death of Adam Kargus at the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre, after he was housed with another inmate with a long history of violence.

In addition to specific issues of overcrowding and lack of direct supervision at EMDC, this tragedy also shows the ineffectiveness of the province-wide offender tracking information system in letting correctional officers know about inmates with previous records of assaults or gang activity.

When is the government going to take real action to ensure officer and inmate safety across all of Ontario's correctional facilities?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci beaucoup for the question. I think it's a very important question.

As you know, the safety of both the inmates and the correctional officers is my number one priority. We focus strongly on communication between our correctional facilities and the justice system. We have a centralized database, the offender tracking information system. Inmates' demeanour and threat levels are on OTIS, this information system. Access by administrator, by facility transfer—we have procedures/standing orders for sharing inmate information. Correctional officers are trained for this. Information is shared with staff, including criminal and behaviour history. Information is also shared with staff verbally, in writing and electronically. Correctional officers are expected to familiarize themselves with inmates' situations and share any updates during—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Again to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services: I think it would be helpful for the minister to actually talk to correctional officers herself. They know that a provincial database is only as good as the information it contains and how widely it is shared. There has been no auditing of the database to ensure accuracy. There are no processes in place to provide consistent access across institutions and, despite what the ministry claims, there are no mechanisms for staff to raise concerns.

When will the minister accept her responsibility for oversight and put systems in place to make sure that the offender tracking information system is doing what it is supposed to do?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you for the question. As I said, the health and safety of both the correctional officer and the inmate are my number one priority.

This system, the OTIS information system, is constantly reviewed. That review is part of our continuous improvement process. The process includes a weekly report of employee concerns related to the system, so we are taking the complaints and we are addressing the complaints.

OTIS was audited this past year from a technological perspective, and probation and parole officers, as well as approved designated staff who have a business reason to access the offender's record, can use a centralized database for this purpose.

Mr. Speaker, we take it very seriously. It's continuously reviewed. If the correctional officers have a concern about it, I advise them to bring their concerns to the management.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, in 2003, all three political parties and all three political leaders committed to closing all coal-fired energy in Ontario, and two of the five plants producing energy that way were in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

For 10 years I've been working on the conversion, the maintenance and the sustainability of both of the coal plants in my riding, including the plant in Atikokan, and that conversion, I'm pleased to say, is well under way.

Over the next decade, there's the potential for a number of mining projects to come on stream in northwestern Ontario, and while there continues to be disagreement over the energy needs of northwestern Ontario in the next five to 10 years, we need to ensure that Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario are positioned for the economic growth and job creation these projects may bring.

Last Friday I was pleased to announce, along with my colleague from Thunder Bay—Superior North, that the Thunder Bay generating station will be converted to burn advanced biomass fuel.

Minister, for the benefit of the House, could you please share some of the work that went into ensuring the future of the Thunder Bay generating station?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan for his question. The member and his colleague the Minister of Northern Development and Mines have been advocating on this issue for many years—unlike the third party, who only seem to have discovered it yesterday—and I want to commend them for their work on this file.

Friday's announcement was the result of the member's strong leadership over the past 10 years, as well as that of his colleague from Thunder Bay, and months of working with the local stakeholders and residents and Ontario's energy agencies.

The conversion to advanced biomass is another step in reducing dirty coal burning in Ontario and puts our province on the leading edge of worldwide biomass research. The continued operation of this plant will ensure that Thunder Bay has the power it needs to support future economic expansion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Minister, thank you for the response. Having worked on this issue for 10 years, I know how important Friday's announcement was for the constituents in my riding and for the future of northwestern Ontario. Not only will this cost-effective conversion to advanced biomass ensure that Thunder Bay has the supply of clean and reliable electricity it needs, it will secure significant employment until at least 2020.

With the Thunder Bay and Atikokan generating station conversions now in place, I feel we're well positioned to move forward and prepared for the mining expansion that may come in the northwest. The five-year contract will allow us to monitor the region's energy demands over the near term and make the appropriate decision at that time.

Can the minister please update the House on what other steps our government has taken to ensure that northwestern Ontario has a supply of clean, reliable and affordable electricity?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Iain Angus, the chair of the Northwest Energy Task Force, states, "Five years is really good. A commitment to keep the plant alive is really good."

We expect the converted unit will begin operating in 2015 on a five-year contract, helping ensure that the residents of Thunder Bay continue to have a clean, reliable, cost-effective supply of electricity.

To ensure the region has the energy it needs for new mining projects, we have also committed to building a new transmission line between Wawa and Thunder Bay, which will provide an additional 650 megawatts of capacity for the northwest. The North of Dryden report lays out additional options for new generation and transmission lines over the short and long term, including the connection of remote communities in the region.

Our government has taken action to ensure that northwestern Ontario has the energy they need when they need

it, and we'll continue to work to ensure that the capacity is there for mining developments in the future.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health: The minister has been boasting about a new management team at Ornge since January 2012. One would have expected that a competent and experienced management team would have at least ensured that the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment, come to order.

Mr. Frank Klees:—federal safety regulations would be met by that organization. But we find this week that a Human Resources Canada report cited that Ornge failed to comply in six specific areas, including failing to adequately train pilots on the hazards associated with operating helicopters in northern Ontario, especially when flying for nighttime emergencies.

Speaker, this was under the current management team. I want to know, from the minister, how much more evidence does she need to conclude that Ornge does not have the core competency to manage an aviation business, and will she agree to transfer that to the private sector—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, it's interesting to hear the recommendation from the member opposite. No, we will not be transferring Ornge to a private sector operator. The improvements at Ornge have been significant, tangible and real, and they have been working with HRSDC to ensure that they fully comply with the directions made by HRSDC.

1140

They have already moved on a number of fronts. I will go over them again: additional training for helicopter pilots, including controlled flight into terrain; the revised operating procedures for night operations, including operations into black-hole sites. They're installing solar lighting pads at 91 helipads, including in the north, to assist pilots landing at night. Speaker, they're auditing all training—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, how much longer will this minister put pilots and paramedics and patients at risk? It is very clear. Not only the HRSDC report, but there were two Transport Canada reports issued earlier this year that show non-compliance in a number of areas, specifically with regard to pilot training: training pilots on simulators in a model that is different from a model they are being asked to fly, not training pilots in terms of de-icing—fundamental issues that any company with the experience and competency in aviation would know. It shouldn't take a report to point out the shortcomings of the management at Ornge.

This minister, intent on keeping the Mazza scheme in place, continues to put pilots and paramedics and patients

at risk. When will she agree to finally settle on making the important changes there rather than perpetuating a Mazza scheme? That's my question. Will she take the necessary leadership? Will she—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, if the member opposite would take off his ideological blinkers and look at what's actually happening, he would see that that change is well under way.

I'm going to continue with some of the changes that have been made since May 31. They're hiring flight operations quality assurance inspectors and a manager of flight training and standards. They're auditing all training records to identify and address any training needs for staff. They're ensuring that all helicopters have advanced avionics in their fleet, Speaker.

These steps that are being taken will continue to improve the quality of care, but the people at Ornge are doing excellent work. Just yesterday, they transferred 32 patients. Four little children got the health care they needed, thanks to the good work of the people at Ornge.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Ms. Sarah Campbell: To the Minister of Transportation: Last weekend, much later than usual, the northwest finally received its first dump of snow, and the contractors should have been prepared. Despite MTO assurances that the ministry has increased contractors' budgets by 16%—and that will put new equipment on the roads—conditions were as bad as ever in the northwest: highways closed, accidents increased, and the region came to a standstill. Even the public school board's bus cancellation notice conceded very little clearing had occurred.

When will the minister get serious about the safety in northwestern Ontario and ensure that northerners can travel safely on the highways in all seasons?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, we have added 50 crews and vehicles in northeastern and northwestern Ontario alone. There are six additional crews on duty now in the Kenora-Rainy River area. There are more vehicles than ever before.

There is also a program where we are requiring all contractors to replace all of their vehicles over 10 years at at least 10% per year. That's well under way.

It does snow; there are icy conditions that come up quickly. The other thing that's been added, and in Kenora this is a particular challenge, is that we do pre-treat the bridges for icing, which is the biggest risk.

Mr. Speaker, we have the safest roads in North America, including the north, and given our weather challenges, that's rather huge.

I will look at the particular issues in your constituency, and if there isn't a response, I'll ensure there is one.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: You know, that all sounds fine and dandy, but the bottom line is that you've reduced these contracts by \$22 million. The NDP has been forced to compile road reports for the past two years just to prove to your ministry that a problem exists.

I'm hearing things—yesterday, my office was flooded. I've heard that there's no proactive work being done on roads; that the salt doesn't go down when they know that there's going to be an issue.

Last year was the worst year that we've had in history. We're having things like 14 transport pileups. Some highways aren't safe to travel for a week after there's very little snow.

We can't continue to shut down the entire region whenever there's a snowfall, and your assurances are not working. Will you act now to ensure that highways in northwestern Ontario are maintained all year long?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The challenge isn't just snow. I was in Sudbury earlier this week with the MPP from Sudbury. It was a perfectly bone-dry day and we had accidents because cars flipped over. No snow, nothing visible, people didn't perceive it, but we had icing on the bridges. And when we have bad snow, it's a problem.

It's a particular problem in the north because we don't have enough alternate routes, which is why this government, unlike others past, with no help from the federal government is twinning those highways. I do not run the contract, but they have more equipment than they ever had before.

I've been up with the MPP from Algoma-Manitoulin. I will come to your constituency. I will meet with the contractor with you and we'll make sure you get satisfaction.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe-Grey on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion: that the order of the House dated November 4, 2013, referring Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act, to the Standing Committee on General Government, be discharged and that Bill 105 be referred instead to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member has asked for unanimous consent. Do we agree? I heard a no.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins-James Bay on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would just say, in regard to this particular request that's been put forward by the honourable House leader of the official opposition, there has been no discussion amongst the House leaders at this point to deal with this.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: One second, Speaker. One second. None of the parties are opposed to 105; there is a way of moving—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. As is the convention, that is not the place for me as the Speaker. That's not a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: But I got it on record.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know that you've put in on the record, but that's not my responsibility.

I would offer all members to get the House leaders together to have that discussion.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1148 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: On behalf of my colleague from Perth–Wellington, I'd like to acknowledge that Brent Royce is in the building. He's an OFA director, and today he is touring Queen's Park with his daughter.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CLARENCE KIEFFER

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you that it was an absolute honour last week to be around my riding and share in the Remembrance Day tributes that were paid. I want to thank all of the volunteers who did me the honour of being present at the various Remembrance Day parades and cenotaphs to present the provincial wreath on my behalf.

Specifically today, I am honoured to stand and talk about an event that I attended in my riding of Huron–Bruce last weekend. I would like to acknowledge all volunteer contributions, but specifically I would like to express my gratitude to one individual from Walkerton. His name is Mr. Clarence Kieffer.

On November 9, I attended a Remembrance Day banquet and dinner organized by the Canadian Legion branch 102 in Walkerton, where the 13th annual Honour a Hero exhibit was featured. Honour a Hero is an annual display and school program dedicated to honouring veterans of all Canadian conflicts. The 3,000-square-foot display was filled with Canadian military artifacts from 1812 to Afghanistan. This tribute was an incredible way for both young and old to acknowledge and appreciate the sacrifices made by our veterans.

I would like to applaud the incredible efforts of Clarence Kieffer. Mr. Kieffer has worked tirelessly to make this exhibit a success and honour the families of all the veterans. This year, Mr. Kieffer obtained almost 500 new artifacts, and has received a stunning 100 additional artifacts from local families for the coming year, to incorporate into the collection. The entire riding of Huron–Bruce appreciates Mr. Kieffer's efforts and his dedication to our veterans.

KOREAN WAR

Ms. Cindy Forster: I, too, had the pleasure of attending a number of Remembrance Day services in my riding. At these ceremonies, we had the opportunity to

remember every brave Canadian who fought or fell in wars and conflicts around the globe.

However, at the Remembrance Day event in Port Robinson, I was remiss to mention the 60th anniversary of the Korean War in my remarks. There were two Korean veterans from Niagara region, Unit 15, of the veterans' association who gently reminded me of my omission, and rightly so. In apology, I'll use today to raise public awareness of the forgotten war.

In this three-year-long war, 516 Canadians died, making it the third-deadliest conflict in the country's history. Nearly 400 are buried in the Republic of Korea, and are inscribed in the Korean War Book of Remembrance.

We need to ensure that we are teaching our children about each and every war and conflict where Canadians have fought and given their lives. Each July 27, on Korean War Veterans Day, we will remember those who fought in the Korean War and thank them.

With the red poppies stored safely again, let's make sure Remembrance Day is not just on November 11, but every day of the year. For the families of 26,000 Canadians who served in Korea; to the 519 who paid the ultimate sacrifice; to Romeo Daley and all 32 members of the Korea Veterans Association; and to the 100 surviving Korean War vets in Niagara, I say thank you. Your service to your country will not be forgotten.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Mike Colle: On behalf of the wonderful Filipino community in the riding of Eglinton–Lawrence and the Filipino communities all across this great province, it is with great sadness that I rise today to speak about the horrible tragedy bestowed upon the people of the Philippines through Typhoon Haiyan. This historic super-storm wreaked havoc and ravaged the Philippines.

Again, thousands have been left homeless, many have been killed, but the incredible resilience of the people of the Philippines is mirrored in the incredible resilience in the Filipino communities here in Ontario. That's why throughout my riding there are churches, like St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church, Our Lady of Assumption Church, Glencairn Baptist Church and St. Eugene's Chapel on Bathurst Street, which are raising money, and also goods and clothing, to send back to the Philippines.

I also want to thank the people of Ontario, through the government of Ontario, for sending \$1 million to the Canadian Red Cross to help in their relief efforts.

Again, our prayers are with them. I encourage everybody to keep on encouraging donations to help these people who are in desperate need of basic housing, clothing and medicine. Please think of them in your prayers.

DIABETES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, the recent policy change from the Ministry of Health regarding blood glucose test

strips has sparked great concern in my riding, and with the council of East Ferris. They're so concerned that Mayor Bill Vrebosch wrote the minister and council has adopted a resolution concerning this policy change. The mayor is worried that the potential costs of complications that could arise if those on fixed incomes cannot test their insulin dependency levels would far outweigh the cost of these 77-cent strips. The mayor also worries that this will force people to seek help through the Ontario Disability Support Program or Ontario Works, and sees this as a hidden download cost to municipalities.

The resolution, dated September 10, 2013, from the East Ferris council "respectfully requests that the province of Ontario rescind the policy decision to reduce funding for the blood glucose test strips under the Ontario Drug Benefit Program."

It's worth noting that the money this government spent on the gas plant scandal would have purchased 1.43 billion test strips for those diabetics in need here in Ontario. Again, it's another example of the government putting their interests ahead of the interests of the rest of Ontario.

HOME CARE

Ms. Soo Wong: This government is making the right investments to keep our seniors healthy, active and in their own homes. We're listening to the recommendations in Dr. Sinha's seniors' report entitled *Living Longer, Living Well*. As a result, we're implementing Ontario's Action Plan for Health Care.

That is why Ontario's 2013 budget included a commitment of \$260 million to allow 46,000 more seniors to receive home care. That is on top of the already 30,000 new home care spaces that our government created last year. In total, our government has created 76,000 more spaces in just two years.

Last week, I had the pleasure of announcing \$28 million in funding for home care and community services in the Central East LHIN. That's the creation of two new geriatric assessment and intervention network teams—better known as GAINs—in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, at St. Paul's L'Amoreaux Centre and Carefirst Seniors and Community Services Association. These GAIN teams will work with our local hospital to help respond to clients with challenging behaviours or dementia.

I know that in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt the residents, especially those who are seniors, appreciate our government's announcement, as well as the investment in our people and the commitment to keep our seniors healthy, active, independent and living in their own homes.

WAR OF 1812

Mr. Jim McDonell: It is with great pride that I rise to commemorate the critical battle in the War of 1812 that occurred 200 years ago on November 11, 1813. Roughly

4,000 American soldiers landed just east of modern-day Morrisburg, in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, to embark on a campaign to capture Montreal and cut off a supply route critical to the defence to Upper Canada.

A force of approximately 900 men, made up of British regulars, First Nations allies, the First and Second Glengarry Regiments, the First Stormont Regiment, the First Dundas Regiment and the First Grenville Regiment met them at John Chrysler's farm. Outnumbered by more than four to one, this group of mainly farmers and tradesmen defeated the American invaders, forcing them to retreat back to New York state.

On Remembrance Day, the Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, joined over 1,000 people, including veterans, serving military personnel, schoolchildren and descendants to commemorate what is widely considered the battle that saved Canada from an American invasion 200 years ago, in November 1813.

1510

To quote the Prime Minister, "These soldiers, these Canadians were ordinary men who did an extraordinary thing.... Their gift to us is a separate and distinct country on this continent, true, north strong and free."

He announced that the SD&G Highlanders, or the Glens, had just received notice that Queen Elizabeth had become their colonel-in-chief, a major honour for the Glens. The Glens are the military descendants of the militia units originating in Scotland and re-formed for the defence of British North America during the War of 1812. They went on to many accomplishments in later conflicts.

It was my honour to be part of the ceremony.

EVENTS IN NICKEL BELT

ÉVÉNEMENTS DIVERS À NICKEL BELT

M^{me} France Gélinas: I too want to spend a little bit of time talking about the remembrance week that I spent in my riding.

It started on Saturday in Chelmsford. It was a really sombre ceremony in a really bad, wet snowstorm.

On Sunday, I went to Naughton, where we still have some World War II veterans who were there in the ceremony.

On Monday, I started in Falconbridge; the place was packed. They have very good pipers there, and the navy cadets do the cenotaph guard. Then I'm off to the Onaping Legion, where the schoolchildren do some singing. I finish the day at the Lockerby Legion to pay my respect to these veterans.

On Wednesday, Boris Naneff, the owner of Rainbow Concrete, took me for a tour of his facility. He gave me some pretty good advice for good road infrastructure.

Puis, c'était le dîner au Club 50, un club d'âge d'or, où plusieurs personnes avaient des questions au sujet des soins de longue durée.

On Thursday morning, the Minister of Transportation was in my riding making an announcement on winter

road maintenance—a little victory. This is something we had worked on really hard. Then I joined MPP Teresa Armstrong to talk about seniors at Parkside Centre. Note to self: still need the five-day wait time guarantee for home care. I spent the evening in Sudbury at the 40 Under Forty event. Congratulations to Richard Eberhardt, the president of the Sudbury NDP, for his well-deserved award.

Friday morning, mon premier rendez-vous avec Pierre Riopel, le président du Collège Boréal, and a visit to Moose Mountain with Cliffs, and then the Santa Claus parade on Saturday.

A full week, but I loved every minute of it.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Bill Mauro: I had a great announcement in Thunder Bay last week. Speaker, as you'll recall, in 2003, all three political parties and all three political leaders committed to closing all of the coal-fired generation in the province of Ontario. Two of the five energy generating facilities from coal in Ontario happened to be in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, and what nobody was talking about over the course of eight or nine years was: Should we consider converting those existing coal-fired facilities to something else? Two of the five were in my riding, and nobody was talking about conversion.

I can tell you, Speaker, that after 10 years of working on this particular file, I am thrilled with the announcement that we had in Thunder Bay last week. First of all, on the Atikokan one, the conversion started about a year ago: a \$200-million construction project that saved jobs and saved the tax base in that community. And just last week on Friday, we made the announcement for the Thunder Bay plant, which will be converted—in a very cost-effective manner, I might add—to advanced biomass. Both of these conversions will maintain the tax base in these communities, and they will maintain jobs.

There continues to be disagreement about what the energy demands in Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario will be on a go-forward basis. That's why this announcement on Friday in Thunder Bay made perfect sense for a variety of reasons.

I'm disappointed that over the course of three provincial elections, neither the NDP nor the Conservatives showed any interest in this matter at all, but I'm very thrilled with the announcement we were able to make in Thunder Bay just last week.

COLLINGWOOD GENERAL AND MARINE HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to recognize the Collingwood General and Marine Hospital for having received the second-highest designation from Accreditation Canada for standards of excellence in the delivery of health care.

Accreditation surveyors spent three days evaluating the hospital by comparing their performance with

national standards. The hospital met 97.4% of nearly 2,000 standards of care. This distinguished recognition is acknowledgement of the hospital's commitment to their patients and the value they place on the safety and well-being of those they serve. It also speaks to the tremendous team of physicians, nurses, staff, volunteers and board members who work tirelessly to make it all possible.

I meet with hospital CEO Linda Davis and board chair Shiela Metras on a regular basis, and the effort that they and all the staff put forth under such extreme circumstances is something to be commended.

For a small-town hospital that is literally bursting at the seams, that sees more emergency visits in a year than most hospitals across the province, that has had an expansion application in to this government for over nine years and that is also under considerable fiscal restraint because of this government's various scandals and poor management, to work within their budget to provide such high-quality care and to do it well is an impressive accomplishment and something that the hospital should be incredibly proud of.

As MPP for Simcoe–Grey, I am tremendously grateful to the people at our local hospital for their ongoing commitment and dedication to our community. They make our area a better place to live, to work and to play, and for that I would like to thank them for a job well done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Kenora–Rainy River has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure concerning the lack of highway maintenance in northwestern Ontario. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ENERGY CONSUMER PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT (ELIMINATION OF FIXED RATE ELECTRICITY CONTRACTS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS D'ÉNERGIE (ÉLIMINATION DES CONTRATS DE FOURNITURE D'ÉLECTRICITÉ À TARIF FIXE)

Ms. Campbell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 132, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 to eliminate fixed rate electricity contracts between retailers and consumers / Projet de loi 132, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2010 sur la protection des consommateurs d'énergie pour éliminer les contrats de

fourniture d'électricité à tarif fixe entre détaillants et consommateurs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Currently, under the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010, contracts between retailers and consumers for the provision of electricity at a fixed rate are permitted. The bill adds part II.1 to the act. It provides that contracts between retailers and consumers for the provision of electricity at a fixed rate that are entered into after a specified day are deemed to be void. It also provides that existing contracts between retailers and consumers for the provision of electricity at a fixed rate that are renewed, extended or amended after a specified day are deemed to be void on the day the existing contract expires, except if amended to provide for cancellation of the contract without penalty. Part II.1 further provides various protections to consumers who enter into contracts that are deemed to be void under the new part. Such protections include the right to a refund of money paid under a void contract and freedom from liability for obligations under such a contract.

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE RELATIVE À LA POLICE PROVINCIALE DE L'ONTARIO

Mrs. Meilleur moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 133, An Act to amend the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 133, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la négociation collective relative à la Police provinciale de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I will make my statement during ministerial statements.

1520

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE POLICE PROVINCIALE DE L'ONTARIO

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, it's my pleasure to introduce Jim Christie, who is the president of

the Ontario Provincial Police Association, who is with us today.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to discuss amendments to the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act on behalf of my colleague John Milloy, Minister of Government Services.

I would like to start by informing the House that these amendments were meant to be passed as part of the 2012 budget. The removal of these measures in committee was an error and one that the other parties agree was not intentional. We know that stand-alone legislation on this item is something that the official opposition has said they will support, and the leader of the third party has stated in writing that she also supports these measures.

The amendments, if passed, will remove OPP management rights from legislation, making the act consistent with the Police Services Act and the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act.

Les modifications permettront de transférer la clause des droits de gestion de la loi à la convention collective.

This will make the rights of OPP officers the same as those of officers working for municipal police services. The government is now fulfilling the commitment we made to make these changes, which will impact approximately 9,000 uniformed and civilian employees of the OPP.

Should this legislation pass, the employer would work with the Ontario Provincial Police Association to make any of the necessary changes to the collective agreements to align them with the proposed legislative amendments.

Ces modifications rendront notre système plus équitable et assureront que tous les agents de police bénéficient des mêmes droits en matière d'emploi dans l'ensemble de la province.

In closing, I would like to emphasize again that all parties agreed that these proposed amendments are necessary, and they will provide consistency and create a fairer system for OPP officers across the province.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm proud to rise in the House today on behalf of Ontario's two million students to acknowledge Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week. Speaker, we know that a safe, inclusive and accepting environment makes a school a great place where students can learn, grow and thrive. That's why today, and every day this week, thousands of students across Ontario will be recognizing Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week.

As Ontarians, we must all do our part to make our schools safe, inclusive and accepting places to learn. This week is the perfect opportunity to help promote awareness and understanding of important issues like bullying. This is also an opportunity for everyone to come together as educators, students, school administrators, parents, and community and government leaders to make it clear that every single student has the right to feel safe, included and accepted in our schools.

This month we are also celebrating a milestone of sorts. It was nearly two years ago, on November 30, 2011, that Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, was introduced. I'm delighted that this important piece of legislation is helping to make every Ontario school a safe and accepting place to learn, while ensuring that all students have the support they need to grow and reach their full potential.

As we recognize Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week, I'm also pleased to officially launch this year's Premier's Awards for Accepting Schools. These awards recognize Ontario's safe and accepting schools teams for the exceptional and innovative work they have done in creating a positive school climate and culture that supports student achievement and well-being. Ontario schools are among the best in the world, in part because of these teams.

Actually, I remember when I was on the first selection panel for the Premier's Awards for Accepting Schools three years ago. It was an uplifting and inspiring experience for our team to read about the incredible work happening at schools across the province. I remember Random Act of Kindness Days, girls' and boys' self-esteem programs, and a day of silence to demonstrate how victims of bullying feel silenced.

We are all responsible for creating a positive school climate and preventing inappropriate behaviour such as bullying, sexual assault, gender-based violence and incidents based on homophobia, transphobia or biphobia.

I encourage you to take a moment every day, and especially this week, to make a real difference in making sure that everyone feels respected, valued, and accepted. I also encourage you to participate in the activities planned this week in your local schools and communities.

So let's all work together to make a difference in the lives of Ontario students and families. Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week is the perfect time to take action, create positive change and help make our schools safe and accepting for all.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It's truly a pleasure to rise in the House and announce that the government is introducing new health and safety training requirements for the province's workforce. This training will help protect workers and keep them safe.

Remember the Christmas Eve construction tragedy where four workers lost their lives? We have seen the toll these preventable tragedies have on our communities, on the workers' loved ones and on their colleagues. These new training programs are about trying to make sure this never happens again.

Following that tragedy, the government appointed the Expert Advisory Panel on Occupational Health and Safety. The panel was led by Tony Dean and other health and safety experts representing both workers and employers. Basic health and safety awareness training for all workers and supervisors were recommendations num-

ber 14 and 15 in the report. The panel recommended that, "A standard should be developed to establish a health and safety awareness program.... It should be a requirement that workers receive this information at the entry level, prior to being exposed to workplace hazards"—and all supervisors who are responsible for front-line workers.

I remember standing in this Legislature when Bill 160, which laid the groundwork to implement the expert panel's findings, was passed with the support of all three political parties in this House. That support reflected an enduring truth: that creating safe workers in turn creates safe workplaces, people looking out for one another.

These new training requirements will lay the foundation for building a culture where health and safety are the centre of the workplace and are part of our even greater focus on preventing workplace incidents and injuries before they happen. These changes represent the greatest transformation of Ontario's health and safety rules in over 30 years.

Since the recommendations were accepted, the Ministry of Labour and our government have worked hard to make them a reality. We have appointed the province's first chief prevention officer, George Gritziotis, who is overseeing this transformation and helping make sure injuries do not happen in the first place. We have increased the number of enforcement officers to make sure employers follow the rules.

We will be launching the first-ever province-wide integrated occupational health and safety strategy, developed with input from labour, employers, injured workers, and community groups, to establish clear priorities and rules that will guide our work in the years ahead.

The Health and Safety at Work: Prevention Starts Here poster is mandatory in all workplaces. This poster explains, in everyday language, the health and safety rights and responsibilities of workers, supervisors and employers. This is one of many tools the ministry uses to encourage workers to get involved in health and safety, and explains when and why to contact the Ministry of Labour.

Our approach is working. Injury rates are down 30% since 2003. But we must do more because we all know the toll these workplace injuries and fatalities take on our families, our communities, our co-workers and our employees. That can never be tallied or have a dollar sign put beside it.

The burden on our employers, businesses and the overall economy of Ontario, however, is known. In the manufacturing industry alone last year, there was the equivalent of 328 years of lost time—328 years of lost time every single year in just the manufacturing sector. The productivity loss is staggering. We cannot allow this to continue, and we all have a role to play.

1530

The government is absolutely committed to doing our part and making sure workers are properly trained and protected. The basic awareness training requirements are the next step towards making our workplaces even safer.

Developed in partnership with business, worker groups and municipalities, the training program will ensure workers and supervisors are trained in the basic, foundational principles of Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act in plain, everyday language.

This new on-the-job training can be completed by workers and supervisors taking part in a one-hour tutorial, either individually or in groups. To assist business, especially small business, the government has made the accessible training programs materials available for free, because this is about giving workplaces the tools and knowledge they need to make sure our workers go home safe to their families at the end of their shifts.

These workbooks are available in English, French, Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, Hindi, Punjabi, Portuguese, Spanish and Urdu, and can be downloaded from the Ministry of Labour website or ordered through ServiceOntario.

Our e-learning modules are also now available on our website in English and French and will be available in additional languages in spring 2014. The flexibility provided by the e-learning modules will be helpful and will allow training to happen on the worker's and company's schedules. Once the online training is completed, a worker or supervisor will receive a certificate that is valid for the remainder of his or her career.

The new training requirement will come into force July 1, 2014, and will be mandatory for all current workers and supervisors, and especially new hires, because we know that new and young workers are three times more likely to be injured in the first month of their employment than experienced workers. This time will allow for businesses to prepare for compliance with the required training. Companies that already provide training that meets these new requirements will not need to participate.

Based on the recommendation of the expert advisory panel, the new basic awareness training will include information on:

- the duties and rights of workers under the Occupational Health and Safety Act;
- the duties of employers and supervisors under the act;
- the roles of health and safety representatives and joint health and safety committees under the act;
- the roles of the Ministry of Labour, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board and our health and safety system partners under the legislation;
- the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System regarding information and instruction on controlled products; and
- occupational illness.

This is about keeping workers safe and supporting business with enhanced productivity and competitiveness.

Here's what Scott Ingraham, project development engineer at PowerTel Utilities Contractors Ltd., said about this new health and safety awareness program: "Staying competitive as a business means being safe.

This training demonstrates achievement in training which is beneficial for employers."

It is designed to explain health and safety rights and responsibilities to the working people of our province so that they have the knowledge and tools to stay safe at work and contribute to building a stronger economy and stronger communities.

Our goal, Speaker, is to protect the lives and well-being of the province's working people, especially the most vulnerable, and make sure their workplaces are safe, strong and productive. That is a goal that can save lives, and that is a goal we all share.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure for me to rise to respond to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services on her introduction of the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Amendment Act, 2013. I also would like to acknowledge Jim Christie, the president of OPPA, for being here today.

I also want to say to the minister that that was probably one of the shortest ministerial statements I'd ever heard since my short time in this place. I appreciate that the minister wasn't partisan, and I won't be partisan as well. I have been in this critic portfolio only a short time, but I have to give her credit: On October 24, we attended the OPPA conference in Blue Mountain, where she announced that the government would be bringing in this legislation. I want to thank her staff and government services staff for briefing me on the bill over the lunch hour. I'm looking forward to the whole briefing on your ministry tomorrow, Minister.

But I do want to say something to Jim. I've met with a lot of stakeholders in the three and a half years that I've been elected as an MPP, and I want to thank you and members of the OPPA for the tremendous reception that you gave me at your annual conference at your president's banquet. I don't know that I've ever had a welcome mat rolled out that way, and I want to thank you and the members there for that evening. You certainly made it clear where your priorities stood on having this bill introduced to the Legislature, and I know that my previous critics, the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and the member for Simcoe North, have been strong and very close to the OPPA and have really enjoyed their exchanges. So we look forward to the debate.

I also want to do a shout-out just quickly because my son, while he's not becoming a member of the OPP, is starting this month with the Edmonton city police. I know his mom, Cindy Bisson, who is a member of the Ontario Provincial Police, is very proud that he is in policing, and so is his stepdad, Paul Bisson, who just retired from the OPPA. I feel good that now I've got some cops in the family. I look forward to continuing our dialogue and debating this bill in the House.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Rob Leone: I rise on behalf of the PC caucus to talk about Bullying Awareness Week. As a former educator, my favourite times were when the students were actually teaching me about some of the material that we have been experiencing.

On November 4, Breanne Wormald emailed myself and the member from Nepean–Carleton a video link to a video her brother Justin and his friend Matt created on bullying. The title of the video was Be Yourself, a message that was very powerful in just saying it, but looking at the visuals that they created in that video, I think the members of the Legislature would do themselves a lot of good to actually view that video. I think it's a very powerful video, one that was created by these two individuals from Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. I think it speaks volumes to the challenges that we face as a society to combat bullying, and the messages are so powerful that I hope every member who sits in the province of Ontario takes them to heart.

On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I want to congratulate Matt and Justin on their work, and I hope that all members of the Legislature take the time to view the video.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It is a pleasure to rise today to speak about health and safety training.

At our family business, we employ 60 fantastic people, and keeping our staff safe and healthy is something our family takes very seriously. I can also tell you that when you have proper health and safety training programs, your workforce is more productive and better equipped, so this is an issue that I'm very familiar with and very supportive of.

There's also an immediate need for this to be balanced with creating jobs and growing Ontario's economy. There are things that are holding Ontario back right now: sky-high energy rates, growing debt and deficit, outdated labour laws and government red tape.

One million men and women across Ontario are out of work. I look forward to speaking with Ontario residents, as our leader does as well, on the Made in Ontario Jobs Tour that is currently ongoing. We were up in Alliston and Sudbury last week, and we will be visiting every corner of the province to talk about our PC jobs plan.

On behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus, we will continue standing up for Ontario workers and their safety in the workplace and continue to support improvements to health and safety training that will keep Ontario workers safe.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Last year, after a series of tragic events, this Legislature passed the Accepting Schools Act, Bill 13. Legislators in every party were moved by

the disturbing stories that person after person brought before us about bullying in our schools.

1540

It now appears that the bill was passed, but not followed up. Every school board is required by the Education Act to have a detailed bullying prevention and intervention plan posted on their websites. My read of websites where plans are supposed to be posted indicates they are few and far between. The minister should tell us how many school boards have written and are implementing a safe schools plan.

Every school board is required by the Education Act to have a mandatory annual professional development day devoted to educating staff on bullying prevention and intervention. How is the minister ensuring that boards comply with this Education Act regulation?

Schools are supposed to be doing schools surveys to see if bullying prevention is working. Can the minister tell us if these surveys are indeed being done and what they are showing?

On the basis of anecdotal information and a survey of school boards and schools on the Internet, it does not appear that this act is, in fact, being enforced, that it is being monitored, that students are getting the protection that we in this Legislature decided they needed to have. If indeed this is the case, one has to ask how many more tragedies will have to happen before the Liberals take this matter seriously.

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise today on behalf of our leader, Andrea Horwath, and the Ontario NDP caucus to offer some initial comments about the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Amendment Act. New Democrats have repeatedly called for the modernization of this act, and for that reason we're pleased to see these amendments coming forward.

In particular, we recognize that there is a fairness issue at stake. The OPP Collective Bargaining Act needs to be brought into alignment with other similar legislation to give OPP officers the same rights and procedures enjoyed by municipal police associations and public sector unions. My colleagues and I in the NDP caucus will be closely examining the legislation that has been introduced today, but I can say with certainty that we strongly support the removal of management rights provisions from the existing act. Instead, we believe that management rights should be addressed through the collective bargaining process where they can be negotiated and dealt with through the arbitration system.

We appreciate the fact that this government has moved forward to address one of our party's recommendations to modernize the outdated provisions of this act. We look forward to studying the legislation in more detail and to hearing the input of stakeholder groups to ensure that the bill supports fair and positive labour relations for police services in Ontario.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to rise today in response to the Minister of Labour's announcement.

If knowledge indeed equals power, then training certainly equals protection. The minister references the Tony Dean panel that brought forward the recommendations in terms of mandatory entry-level training. I was the training director of the Labourers' union, local 625 facility, and I presented at the Tony Dean panel.

I was supportive of mandatory entry-level training at that point and I remain supportive of it, but unfortunately, there are so many other recommendations within the Dean report that need to be acted on right now, one of which is enhancements of the fall protection training standards. Although fall protection training standards have been on the books—enhanced training standards have been on the books since 2010, they have yet to be acted upon. It's something that I think the minister has the ability to take control of and actually enact those standards.

I'll give him right now eight reasons why he should do that: Conrad Lafrenière, Kevin Raposo, Christopher Birdsell, John J. Smith, Mark Norman, Wayne Fleury, Adam Morin and Nick Lalonde. Those are eight workers who have died since the tragedy in December 2010, because of standards that are really not up to what we would consider widely recognized, and actually of the highest quality and calibre.

It's something that the industry is prepared for. It's a change that we know is coming and it's one that they should fully expect expediently from the minister. I hope that he takes charge of that.

PETITIONS

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

I see my colleague Jerry Ouellette is here. That's great.

It reads as follows:

"Whereas approximately 20% of Ontario's electricity is produced at the Darlington generating station;

"Whereas it was Premier Wynne who cancelled the new build at Darlington, costing Ontario 20,000 direct and indirect jobs associated with the new build;

"Whereas this severely limits employment opportunities for university graduates from the University of Ontario Institute of Technology" and other institutions "who were to gain experience in Darlington nuclear's training centre;

"Whereas in addition to refurbishing the four existing reactors at Darlington" and potentially the eight at the Bruce station "the building of new capacity is important for the future of Ontario's manufacturing sector and for jobs and investment in our Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Ontario's elected MPPs and the provincial government reaffirm their commitment to the complete refurbishment of all four units" at Darlington and the units at Bruce "and that the Ontario government reinstate the original plan for the completion of the two new reactors at the Darlington generating station."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Matteya.

ONTARIO RANGER PROGRAM

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, draw attention to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"The Ontario Ranger Program takes youth out of their comfort zones by taking youth from the south and placing them in northern camps and vice versa, allowing for personal growth;

"The Ontario Ranger Program also helps nearby rural communities as the Ontario Rangers help with various work projects and build partnerships within the communities; the work is recognized and appreciated by these small communities;

"An extensive amount of work maintaining the interior routes in major provincial parks such as Quetico, Algonquin and Temagami is completed by Ontario Rangers on multi-day overnight canoe trips...;

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demonstrate that the Ontario Ranger Program is a valuable program to the youth of Ontario, reverse the decision to close the Ontario Ranger Program and continue to help youth make a difference in Ontario."

I wholeheartedly agree, affix my signature and give it to page Morgan.

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

M. Grant Crack: J'ai une pétition ici à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu qu'il y a un manque criant de lits de soins de longue durée, les listes d'attente sont longues dans les institutions existantes;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Réclamons la mise en place d'un centre de soins de longue durée à l'intérieur des limites de l'ancienne ville de Rockland. »

I concur with this petition, Mr. Speaker, and I give it to page Michaela.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; and

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct that the Ontario public health system and OHIP include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians."

I affix my name in support.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm presenting a petition from Fair Wages Now!

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's minimum wage has been frozen at \$10.25 an hour since 2010, and some workers earn even less due to current exemptions in the Employment Standards Act; and

1550

"Whereas full-time minimum wage workers are living at nearly 20% below the poverty line as measured by the Ontario government's low-income measure (LIM); and

"Whereas minimum wage should, as a matter of principle, bring people working 35 hours per week above the poverty line; and

"Whereas an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$14 per hour would bring workers' wages 10% above the LIM poverty line; and

"Whereas raising the minimum wage will benefit workers, local businesses and the economy by putting money in workers' pockets to spend in their local community;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately increase the minimum wage to \$14 per hour for all workers and thereafter increase it annually by no less than the cost of living."

I agree with the petition and affix my name to it.

LEGAL AID

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I would like to thank Gurdial and Parminder Deol of Rosebush Road near Streetsville for having signed it. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Mississauga Community Legal Services provides free legal services to legal aid clients within a community of nearly 800,000 population; and

"Whereas legal services in communities like Toronto and Hamilton serve, per capita, fewer people living in poverty, are better staffed and better funded; and

"Whereas Mississauga and Brampton have made progress in having Ontario provide funding for human services on a fair and equitable, population-based model;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of the Attorney General revise the current distribution of allocated funds in the 2012-13 budget, and adopt a population-based model, factoring in population growth rates to ensure Ontario funds are allocated in an efficient, fair and effective manner."

I completely agree with this petition and will send it down with page Cynthia.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Jeff Yurek: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada approved Esbriet in October 2012 for individuals with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF);

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has declined to list Esbriet on the Ontario drug benefit formulary or reimburse patients through the Exceptional Access Program;

"Whereas Esbriet is the first of its kind to be approved in Canada for the treatment of IPF and will slow the progression of this fatal disease;

"Whereas the high cost of Esbriet is creating financial hardships for many individuals and their families. Only those patients who have access to a private drug plan can afford the cost of this medication, forcing some patients to go without treatment;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To review and reconsider the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's decision to decline any assistance with Esbriet and consider some form of assistance with the cost of this medication in order to improve the lives of Ontarians with IPF and decrease the cost on the health care system associated with the disease."

I agree with this petition, and I sign my name to it.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Paul Miller: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas servers and bartenders in Ontario earn \$8.90 an hour, far less than the minimum wage; and

"Whereas tips are given to servers and bartenders for good service and to supplement the lower wages they receive; and

"Whereas Ontario law allows for owners and managers to pocket a portion of servers' and bartenders' earned tips or total sales; and

"Whereas thousands of servers across the province have asked for this practice to stop;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the swift passage of Bill 107, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act with respect to tips and other gratuities and thereby end the practice of 'tip-outs' to management and owners."

I agree with this and will sign my name.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas 'texting while driving' is one of the single biggest traffic safety concerns of Ontarians;

"Whereas text messaging is the cause for drivers to be 23 times more likely to be in a motor vehicle accident;

"Whereas talking on a cellphone is found to be four to five times more likely for a driver to be involved in an accident;

"Whereas Ontario is only one of few provinces in Canada where there are no demerit points assessed under the current cellphone/distracted driving legislation currently in place;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To adopt Bill 116 by MPP Balkissoon into law, which calls for each individual guilty of an offence and on conviction to be 'liable to a fine of not less than \$300 and not more than \$700,' in addition to a record of three demerit points for each offence."

I support this petition. I sign it and send it with page Amy.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Auditor General confirmed in his December 2012 report that the Champlain CCAC had the longest wait time in Ontario in which 90% of their clients were placed; and

"Whereas the region requires a comprehensive plan assessing the future long-term-care bed needs of the region, as well as the provision of community care for independent and semi-independent seniors; and

"Whereas the number of Ontarians over 75 years of age is projected to increase by 30% by 2021, the year the baby boomers start to turn 75 years old, putting even more demand on the number of available LTC beds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care immediately conduct a study to identify the current and future requirements for long-term-care beds and community care for independent and semi-independent seniors in our region of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, including the city of Cornwall...."

I agree with this petition and will be passing it off to page—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Jonah Schein: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's minimum wage has been frozen at \$10.25 an hour since 2010, and some workers earn even less due to current exemptions in the Employment Standards Act; and

"Whereas full-time minimum wage workers are living at nearly 20% below the poverty line as measured by the Ontario government's low-income measure (LIM); and

"Whereas minimum wage should, as a matter of principle, bring people working 35 hours per week above the poverty line; and

"Whereas an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$14 per hour would bring workers' wages 10% above" the low-income measure; and

"Whereas raising the minimum wage will benefit workers, local businesses and the economy by putting money in workers' pockets to spend in their local community;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately increase the minimum wage to \$14 per hour for all workers and thereafter increase it annually by no less than the cost of living."

I agree with this. I'll put my name on it and give it to page Morgan.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's a petition in opposition to Settler's Landing wind park and Snowy Ridge wind park.

"Whereas Sprott Power, AKA Zero Emission People, Energy Farming Ontario Inc., and Wind Works, are proposing to construct 10 wind turbines, known as Settler's Landing and/or Snowy Ridge Wind Parks LP within the city of Kawartha Lakes in order to produce up to 20 megawatts of power (the proposed wind parks); and

"Whereas the proposed wind parks are to be located, in whole or in part, on the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the location of the proposed wind parks is not in keeping with the Ontario government's vision for the Oak Ridges moraine, which is the protection of the 'ecological features and functions that support the health

and well-being of the region's residents and ecosystems'; and

"Whereas the proposed wind parks will adversely affect wildlife populations, wildlife migration patterns, human health and the natural environment; and

"Whereas the proposed wind parks will also reduce property values and the quality of life in the surrounding communities;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned," oppose the development of the proposed wind parks.

Signed by hundreds of people from my riding, and I will attach my signature and give it to page Arvind.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Rick Nicholls: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; and

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario health insurance plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives at 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct that the Ontario public health system and OHIP include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians."

Speaker, I approve of this, I sign my name to it and give it to page Amy.

1600

TAXATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas the cost of living in northwestern Ontario is significantly higher than other regions of the province due to the high cost of necessities such as hydro, home heating fuel, gasoline and auto insurance; and

"Whereas an increase in the price of any of these essential goods will make it even more difficult for

people living in northwestern Ontario to pay their bills and put food on the table;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reject any proposed increase to the harmonized sales tax, gas tax or any other fees or taxes in the north-west; and instead investigate other means such as increasing corporate tax compliance or eliminating corporate tax loopholes in order to fund transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area."

I support this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Maya to deliver to the table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 18, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario's school system / Projet de loi 122, Loi concernant la négociation collective dans le système scolaire de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Oh, it's just questions and comments—sorry. Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Who was speaking last?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. So now I'm asking for questions and comments in response to his remarks.

Questions and comments? Questions and comments? Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, when the last Premier took the offensive against teachers and boards of education, we were all in shock in this Legislature, not only because he had billed himself as the education Premier, but because the attacks were so completely unfounded. They were tantamount to a hissy fit by a Premier who found himself with a minority government. They were completely destructive in their nature and implementation.

The forced so-called collective agreements were nothing but impositions; they were not the result of fair collective bargaining. They tore at the root of our hard-fought battles for fair representation and fair collective bargaining.

That isn't all, Speaker. We still operate under a minority government, which should mean that the opposition parties can actually get legislation enacted, that we can

have much stronger input into how our province operates, that we can inform the decisions being made by the government.

Unfortunately, the government scandals don't seem to stop. Ontario's confidence in how well their tax dollars are being spent is increasingly shaken. We have spent many hours in the Legislature trying to get all the of the financial facts and figures about the cancelled gas plants. We have had hearings where the former Premier, the current Premier and many top-ranked officials have given their version of the events, but still the dollars rack up and the full story has not yet been told.

It doesn't stop there, Speaker. The current government continues with the farce about the Slots at Racetracks Program. The horse racing industry is faltering, and municipalities are not jumping onto the casino bandwagon. But rather than work with the industry on how to make the Slots at Racetracks Program even more viable, tracks are closing, horses are being sold out of Ontario and decent, hard-working people are losing their jobs.

My NDP colleagues and I will continue to work with the industry to find the best solution for the Slots at Racetracks Program and get back to the business of horse racing and slots revenue sharing. We will continue to work against the repressive spirits of bills like 122.

This bill alleges to formalize bargaining practice by implementing a proactive process of central and local collective bargaining and providing for central grievance arbitration. A system like this could work and has had some success in places like Greater Vancouver Regional District, which held the GVRD joint negotiations on region-wide issues, with individual bargaining for unit-specific issues. But even that process has had bumps along the road, Speaker.

The process proposed in Bill 122 similarly establishes central bargaining for issues like financial matters and key matters of provincial educational policies. But who establishes what is a key matter of provincial education policy and what can be brought to the table? At this central table, the crown is a formal participant but does not appear to be a party in the sense of being subject to the bargaining-in-good-faith rules under the Labour Relations Act. Therefore, the central table is similar to a tripartite structure but with the inequity of the crown having a slightly different status than the other two parties—so a rather unbalanced process right from the outset. The crown has designated additional matters to the central table, and if these additional items are central or local in cases where the parties do not agree, the Ontario Labour Relations Board will be the body to adjudicate.

There is a two-track arbitration process in which the crown can participate in the arbitration hearing, but it does not have the same status as the other parties at the central table. Shockingly, the employer, the board, is not permitted to settle a local case without the consent of the crown—a further neutering of the roles and responsibilities of the boards and their collective bargaining units. This system seems to enshrine a central award decision

on language for parties with the same central collective agreement. It appears to prevail over any local settlements and/or local arbitration decisions. It also establishes that a union can only be designated as a bargaining agent if it represents at least 15 bargaining units.

To be certain that the position of these unions—ETFO, OSSTF, CUPE, OECTA and AEFO—is very clear, I'll read you the OSSTF bargaining bulletin issued on the 7th of November after a meeting by these affiliates with the Minister of Education. These were presented as a common issue to all affiliates that need to be addressed by the government before the bill became law.

“(1) Crown as party to negotiations: OSTTF ... believes the crown should be a full participant in the negotiations. This would mean that, amongst other things, the legislation should clearly specify that:

“—The crown would be bound by the duty to bargain in good faith (which is arguably now the case).

“—The crown is also bound by the other unfair labour practice provisions under the act (namely sections 70, 72, 73, 76 of the OLRA) in order to provide for a potential remedy in response to government interference.

“(2) Central table for support staff: The article should ‘require’ a central table for support staff and the threshold should be lowered to representation of 11 bargaining units.

“(3) Interest arbitration: OSSTF ... believes the five criteria in the act surrounding interest arbitration should be removed to allow unfettered arbitrations. If they are not deleted, the act should be amended to add a factor favourable to unions such as: ‘The need to establish compensation and other terms and conditions of employment that are fair and reasonable in relation to the qualifications required, the work performed, the responsibility assumed and the nature of the service rendered.’

“(4) Central grievance process: Once a collective agreement is finalized, the central grievance process should include more than a ‘declaration.’ It also needs to give rise to the ability to issue a ‘direction’ so that local boards have to implement whatever decision is made by the arbitrator. This will avoid unnecessary duplication and re-arbitration of issues to obtain appropriate remedies.

“(5) Term and other powers: We believe the crown should not have the ability to dictate the term of the agreement to be two, three, or four years or to unilaterally decide, based on her (the minister's) opinion, what matters will be discussed at the central table. All issues, including term, should be bargained freely.”

This is what the five affiliates see as necessary to make the bill workable and a fairer piece of legislation.

To perhaps be a bit clearer, respecting the government's status as a non-party, it appears that the government is not governed by the Labour Relations Act rules regarding good-faith bargaining because it is not a formal party according to the act. Teacher groups believe it should be a formal party; in other words, there should be clearer provisions ensuring the government's obligation to bargain in good faith and adhere to fair labour prac-

tices. The arbitration criteria is very explicit on the ability of the employer to pay, but there is no mention of fair remuneration, decent working hours and conditions etc. as criteria.

The scope of the ministerial ability to reserve items for the central table is extremely large. This should be restricted. The government has the ability to define two-, three-, or four-year terms for collective agreements. They should be bargained, not dictated, by the government. And the timeline for serving notice to bargain—270 days—is much too long.

1610

The process and implications for central grievance arbitration need to be clearer and ensure a fair process for all employees of all boards.

I agree that the threshold to represent support workers at a central table at 15 bargaining units is much too high; however, I feel that the number should be closer to 10.

The ratification process should be in clear, easily understood language, and, of course, so should all agreements.

Additionally, the school boards have concerns about this process. The provision that the minister may, by regulation, require a school board to pay fees to the Ontario Public School Boards' Association—

Mr. Todd Smith: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Point of order. Just a moment.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm sorry to interrupt the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek in his wonderful remarks that he's making, but there's not a quorum here, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We'll check on a quorum.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is now present.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): A quorum is now present.

The member may continue.

Mr. Paul Miller: It used up 30 of my seconds, but that's okay.

The concern I have expressed before about regulations that are not vetted by committee or the Legislature—raises alarm bells for me on this one. The association objects to the inclusion in the legislation of the provision that allows the employer bargaining agency to be substituted if, in the minister's opinion, the employer bargaining agency is unable or unwilling to perform its duties. Should the government insist on its inclusion, the decision must be made only in extraordinary and specific circumstances, based on an objective test of management accountability, not a ministerial opinion.

The hammer-handed provision that an employer bargaining agency—the school board association—"shall

co-operate in good faith with the crown in preparing for and conducting central bargaining"—but there's no reciprocal requirement for the crown to co-operate in good faith.

Overall, there are many flaws that require amendments in order for this bill to be acceptable. Until these many amendments are made, the bill will not fulfill those requirements.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to respond to the remarks on the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, Bill 122.

I want to talk a bit about the difference in the legislation between the teachers' unions and other unions. The teachers' unions, historically, have a different status. The teachers' unions are actually already named in legislation with respect to who they represent. So in naming, in this legislation, OSSTF to represent public secondary, AEFO to represent all the francophone teachers, OECTA to represent the English Catholic teachers and ETFO to represent the public elementary teachers—we are actually just picking up clauses that are already in legislation and carrying on that traditional piece.

The question then becomes: What about the other unions? The other unions, the support staff unions, are now and will continue to be elected by the members under the Labour Relations Act. So who represents whom is determined by a member vote and can be any one of a number of unions. That's why the support staff language is a little bit different in this case.

What it does allow is that where there is a union that has at least 15 locals anywhere in the province representing support staff, they would automatically be entitled to their own central table. Just so people understand, that means CUPE is entitled to its own central table; OSSTF support workers and ETFO support workers are all entitled to their own central table under the legislation, the way it is proposed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments? The member for London-Essex—no, Elgin-Middlesex—London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker. You can pick any of those three places in any order. It doesn't really matter to me, as long as the three come out—but not Essex. I am not close to Essex. You have to go through Chatham first before you hit Essex.

I want to just comment on the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek's comments, from his new position in the back row. I'm sorry you're sitting there. I'd rather have you up closer to the front. I enjoyed your comments when you were closer there.

However, just to add a few comments to this bill: We've talked about it on our side. I'd like to see his thoughts, perhaps, on the sunset clause that we're proposing to be added to this bill so that we can relook at how well this bargaining agreement works after the next round of bargaining with our teachers. I'd really love to hear your thoughts on the sunset clause that we're proposing as a party here.

We also would love to see regulation 274 put back onto the table to have a discussion of how our teachers are being hired, and I think that would really add to the discussion on the floor.

My one comment, since we do have the Minister of Education here, Speaker, is I'm quite disappointed in the ministry. Last year, I raised a question regarding two deaf children in my riding who were technically able for busing to the school in Milton. They said they'd work on it quite quickly, in fact, to ensure these kids got to Milton. Instead, they responded to my office two weeks ago, six weeks after the school year started. However, the parent got upset with waiting, sold her house, quit her job and moved to Milton in order that her kids can have proper education in this province. The Minister of Education was slow at acting on this. She promised she would. She failed my residents of my riding. I just thought I'd bring it up, since she is sitting in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to be able to stand in this House and represent my constituents from Timiskaming-Cochrane and comment on the remarks given by the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

I listened intently. I've been listening to this debate for a few days, and he has given one of the most in-depth overviews of the bill itself. He has done a good job of—and he raised a concern, as well, of why this bill has actually been brought forward. It has been brought forward because of a lack of trust between the parties, one of the big parties being the government. That lack of trust also spreads to other parts of the government—he brought forward the horse racing issue—but on the education front, it comes mostly from Bill 115.

He really focused on the importance of collective bargaining, how we fought in this province for a long time to have fair, collective bargaining, and how Bill 115 seemed to—not “seemed to.” It did jeopardize that, and this is an attempt by the government to try to become friends again. He did a much better job explaining the different parts of the bill, but basically this could be called the education group-hug bill.

As a party, I think we support this bill with some—and the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek did a good job of saying some of the things that we think could improve this bill, and hopefully he will expand on them again in his two-minute finish.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Scarborough-Rouge River.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I just want to add my comments to the member from Hamilton-Stoney-Creek, who did a very elaborate and technical job of the bill, and I give him credit for actually doing such a good job.

I just want to add a few points, because I think the previous comments indicated that this bill is necessary because of the mess that took place the last time around. But the reality is that this bill is a result of stuff that happened back in 2008. That was when the government

actually took away the taxing rights of school boards and amalgamated some of the school boards in chaos. Since then, school boards have had difficulty negotiating collective agreements, because they were not the funder and they did not know what they would receive to fund their collective agreements.

1620

I think our government has tried, over the last two terms, to correct some of these things, and this bill is a result of the learning exercise we have gone through with previous agreements: that the government is the funder and therefore the government should be at the bargaining table. In fact, the government should be there with its partners, which are the school boards.

I think the minister has clearly defined what she wants to do with this piece of legislation. As a result of this particular bill, we all have hopes that the next round of negotiations will take place with a lot of, if I could call it, “collective agreement” around the table of all three parties that are coming to the table for central bargaining. But it's a piece of legislation that is necessary.

I would say to my colleague from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, let the bill go to second reading and down to committee, and at committee we'll discuss all the recommendations that you put forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London, the education minister, the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane and the member from Scarborough-Rouge River for their comments.

Starting off with the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London: I certainly appreciate his observance of the seating in the place—that was very good of him to notice. Secondly, I must say that, after seeing the performance by his—he wasn't here at the time, but Mr. Harris and his group, who single-handedly attacked the education system in this province and made a mess of it. I have to say, that happened; I witnessed that. My wife is a teacher, and she certainly does not have a lot of nice things to say about that era.

In reference to the education minister, we can certainly address some of these things after second reading and deal with it at committee level. In the present context of a minority government, we certainly have some workable areas now on committees, that we can listen to good ideas from all sides of the House. It's kind of nice under a minority government, because that certainly didn't happen under a majority government.

The member from Scarborough-Rouge River, my colleague: I appreciate his comments about the content of my submission. I hope that it doesn't fall on deaf ears and that it will be taken under consideration at committee level.

But one of the biggest problems in the education system in our province is the funding formula. We have been after that for years. The funding formula has to change. I'll give you an example: We're losing—

probably a third of our high schools are closing in Hamilton. That's terrible. The funding formula is a big reason for that. They have to change that. I don't know why it hasn't been addressed, and it should be very quickly, because it certainly is a major problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise today and to speak to Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

Bill 122 would see the crown legislated as a party at the negotiations table rather than simply school boards and teachers' unions. The crown would be able to participate in central bargaining on matters that impact the entire province, but not in local bargaining.

At the end of the day, what this bill addresses is the politics of labour relations and not simply education.

When looking at any piece of legislation, it's important to note the context and political climate that led to the bill's development. We stand here today debating Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, because of the turmoil that engulfed education last year as the Liberals were unable to settle a deal, and when time was running out, they brought in legislation.

At the time, we realized that money is tight in Ontario and felt that a more equitable solution would be to share the burden with a broader public sector wage freeze across the board. We still feel that this is the right way to go, by the way. It avoids pitting groups against each other, forced to compete for limited resources in an ad hoc manner.

Because of the Liberals' complete and utter mismanagement in the last round of negotiations, drastic measures were required. School boards felt completely out of the loop during negotiations. Relations were so bad that, in an effort to make amends, the Liberals parachuted their hand-picked candidate, former NDP party supporter and union boss Ken Coran, into London West for this summer's by-election, and we all know how popular that move turned out to be for the voters. This is what we must keep in mind when we debate this bill.

That said, Bill 122 does seek to implement a formal negotiation process—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. Order.

Would you continue, please?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Red, orange: You blend them together, they all kind of look the same anyway. Who knows for sure?

But that said, Bill 122 does seek to implement a formal negotiation process. This is a welcome initiative. It appears the government is learning from its mistakes. One could say that a government should get it right the first time instead of allowing an avoidable crisis to develop. But in regard to this bill, I say, "Better late than never."

While it's certainly important for government to lay a foundation for collective bargaining, especially given the fact that the provincial government foots the bill for these agreements, its ultimate impact on students is minor.

Every single member of this Legislature surely values the importance of education in Ontario. On this side of the House, we want to ensure a bright future for all students in the province. We want to make sure that resources are there for kids today and tomorrow. As our education critic the member from Cambridge pointed out, we are now investing \$21 billion in education, with an additional \$1.4 billion in capital investment. Additionally, as of 2012-13, the number of students in Ontario was just over two million.

This all adds up to one of government's most expensive and important responsibilities: the education of current and future generations of our children. Just because we are pumping more money into the issue doesn't mean education in the province is improving. Quality of education, test scores, and levels of education attainment should be the metrics by which we judge the province's education system, not simply how much money we spend. Since this government took office in 2003, spending in education is up \$8.5 billion, but at the same time, there are a quarter of a million fewer students in the system. I'll wrap up this thought by asking the question: Where exactly is the money going?

While I have had experience with bargaining in the past, I don't by any means possess the expertise of any of the labour relations lawyers, who I assume will have plenty to say about this bill at the committee stage.

Overall, this bill does look good on paper. Nobody knows whether the process outlined in Bill 122 is a good process or whether it will be successful in the real world. Nobody really knows. Our education critic, though, has called for the inclusion of a sunset clause in Bill 122, and I think that that would be a wise addition to this bill. After the next full round of negotiations, we can take a step back and evaluate what has gone on—what worked and didn't work—and fix the bill, moving it forward. It would ensure that we improve the bill over time and learn from any mistakes that might be made along the way. With that, this government, within—sorry, let me repeat that again. With anything that this government does, there's bound to be mistakes, just like I blundered that particular statement. We all make mistakes once in a while.

You know, I'll tell you something: The PCs would like to see this government clear the deck so that we can address meaningful legislation that will turn this province's economy around. While Bill 122 serves a purpose, it doesn't address the jobs crisis in Ontario. It's critical. We have a jobs crisis here. This isn't addressing this particular situation. We're struggling through it.

1630

People in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex expect their government to do more to keep spending in check to protect future generations and provide an environment conducive to keeping and gaining jobs. By ensuring that

this government has a seat at the table, we can hopefully do more to provide maximum value for taxpayers' dollars.

While it indirectly helps students when their teachers, school boards and government have a set of rules for negotiating, it is certainly far down the line of things we can do that benefit our children directly.

This bill will not create any jobs for our young students as they enter the workforce, nor does it address Ontario's rapidly increasing debt. While these students are busy being kids, this government is mortgaging their future on spending initiatives to lure voters ahead of a potential election.

Last year, we watched as our students' extracurricular activities were used as a bargaining chip. At the end of the day, the interests of our students were put—

Interjection: Point of order, Speaker: I don't believe that a quorum is present.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Can you check to see if a quorum is—

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is not present.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is present.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): A quorum is present. We'll return to the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Speaker. While students are busy being kids, this government is mortgaging their future on spending initiatives to lure voters ahead of a potential election.

Last year, we watched as our students' extracurricular activities were used as a bargaining chip. At the end of the day, the interests of our students were put last.

As a party, one of our priorities is ensuring that this shameful act does not occur again. We listened to outraged parents and heartbroken students who were forced to miss out on their extracurricular activities. We understand how important these teams and clubs and educational trips are to students. That's why we need to protect extracurricular activities for our students.

Bill 122 does not address this concern, nor does this bill answer our calls to amend regulation 274 to ensure that the best-quality teacher is hired to do the job, regardless of seniority.

Last year, we proved what our party has been advocating. If you don't get your fiscal house in order today, you're going to have to pay for it tomorrow. We saw exactly what happens when the Liberal government spends beyond its means. As too many of our young folk are learning first-hand, a quality education is little comfort if you don't have a job to go to.

Speaker, we lost 740 jobs in Leamington just this past week, plus an additional 350 seasonal jobs, plus the economic impact to that community.

Again I say, you know what? We need to have quality education, but if you don't have the jobs, what good is

the education? We must guarantee both a high quality of education for our children and a healthy economy with ample job opportunities for our young adults. It's my opinion that anything less is a disservice to our children.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: It appears that all three parties support moving this to committee. We've had eight hours of debate, so I think, enough talk and some more action. Let's get this bill to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to comment on my caucus colleague from Chatham-Kent-Essex. As you know, he was newly elected in 2011, and I think he has brought a lot of additional information and, quite frankly, some important points that he raised about the concerns with the legislation. I hope that at the committee level we have a chance to delve deeper and get into some positive recommendations for improving the legislation as it is proposed, and some of the issues raised by my colleague could go a long way to improve the legislation as it is standing before us.

As you know, part of the frustration with the debates that we have in this place is that so much is left to regulation that we don't actually get an opportunity to discuss and figure out what the implications are of legislation as it is proposed.

So I thought that my colleague from Chatham-Kent-Essex raised some excellent points, and I hope they get discussed in further detail at committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My comments will be a prelude to my 10-minute discussion, which I will be beginning, I guess, after this round completes.

What I want to talk about is something that my colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo brought up in her 20 minutes: that when it comes down to our education system, we need to start off with the basic belief that a stable and secure education system is, first of all, fundamental in providing a good education system, but that stable education environment requires an environment of trust, and it requires that we have support staff, education staff and teachers who are also treated with respect. Only through a process which is respectful and which is principled can we achieve a climate in our schools that will result in an education system that is the strongest and most beneficial for our students.

In order to achieve that, we need to make sure we don't shy away from the reality that Bill 115 was one of the key factors in disrupting the entire education system here in the province of Ontario. It was the Liberal government that initiated it and the Conservatives that supported it. That bill, in and of itself, eroded the climate of respect by mistreating and abrogating the rights of teachers in terms of the collective bargaining process, and that's one of the hallmarks of our labour system here in Ontario.

But really, it's about the respectful treatment of our teachers. If we don't have that, we won't have an education system that provides good care for our students. That's the fundamental starting point. I'll build on that in my 10 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I did take the opportunity to listen to the comments from the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex. You know, it's really interesting. You talk about respect for teachers. I remember this very well: In 1999, my wife was eight months pregnant with our daughter Shanae. She was feeling terrible, going through a tough time during her pregnancy, and Mike Harris threw her, as a teacher at St. Teresa's school in Peterborough, out on the picket line. She was eight months pregnant; he threw her out on the picket line.

I don't get mad very often in this place, but to hear "respect for teachers"—what my wife and her colleagues went through in 1998 was just awful; just awful. My family and her colleagues in the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association will never forget that experience in 1998-99. I take no lessons from that member when it comes to how to treat teachers.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Chatham-Kent-Essex has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, I want to thank the members from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and Dufferin-Caledon, and, yes, the Minister of Rural Affairs for your comments. I do appreciate that, and I appreciate and respect the passion and the feelings you have. With all due respect, that's the past. Today is today, and we need to look to the future as to what's going on.

What we need to have in this House is proper legislation. What we want to see, as we have talked about, is a sunset clause. When it goes to committee, it will do that.

But do you know what? Let's get the economy moving first. Let's get it moving forward so all of a sudden, then, the government has the funds from which to provide.

The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek had mentioned in his dialogue that they were closing a number of high schools in Hamilton. Well, there are reasons for that. It could be declining enrolment; it could also be the fact that there just isn't the funding there as well.

Well, you know what? We, on our side, the PCs, don't believe in spending our way out of debt. If you don't have the money, you've got to come up with creative ways to generate revenue, but not through their resource tools, which are all about increasing taxes and putting a heavy burden on the taxpayers themselves. If they focused more on getting business going in this great province, we wouldn't have companies like Heinz leaving. We wouldn't have other companies in my riding, like Worthington Cylinders, leaving and going to the

States because of high energy costs and everything else. So get your house in order, get it together, and maybe we'll get this province growing in the right direction.

1640

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Now, if nothing else, we can certainly applaud the member from Chatham-Kent for his passion. I applaud him for his passion.

Madam Speaker, what I started off saying before is that really, at the heart of it, we're talking about our education system. To begin with, we must start off at the point where we accept this premise that to have a good education system in the province of Ontario, we need to make sure that it's built on a strong foundation. Now, what is that foundation? What foundation can we build our education system on? We recognize that the education system is based on the great work of our teachers and other educational support staff, and other support staff in general for our schools, that there is a partnership between the actual front-line providers of the care and the service for the buildings; the board for each community; the community itself; and the funder of this program, which is the province.

In this relationship between these different parties, we have to recognize that those at the ground level have a better perspective in terms of what the community needs when compared with the central government, when compared with the province. While the province must be responsible for and have oversight over the funding that they provide, there also has to be a strong awareness of the reality that at a community level a school board and the teachers have a better sense of what's going on in the communities. That's a starting point.

One of the fundamental components of creating this climate that will be conducive for our students and conducive for our children is that the entire relationship between all these members, between all these parties, has to be based on respect. If respect is not present in the relationship, then the relationship will crumble.

We don't need any other proof of that relationship crumbling due to a lack of respect than Bill 115. When we're talking about Bill 122, we can't speak about Bill 122 without giving some time to Bill 115, so it's important to look at that. Bill 115, for the record, very clearly was an absolutely fabricated crisis, or a fabricated solution to a fabricated crisis. To make that more clear, there was absolutely no crisis in the schools. There was no looming problem in September. There wasn't any spectre of a school shutdown across the province of Ontario, and anyone who says so is not cognizant of the facts. There simply wasn't.

Then this government decided in the summertime, "Let's bring back the House. Let's reconvene the House because there is this fabricated crisis. Then what we're going to do to solve this crisis—because there's a by-election going on, let's look like we're able to solve it by introducing the legislation."

Happily—and I'm very proud of the constituents and the members of the community of Kitchener-Waterloo—

they saw through this fabricated crisis and they did not support the government. I'm happy that the constituents did that, and I'm proud of them for seeing through this ploy.

But what happened as a result, though the constituents saw through it and though this ploy was put to the side, the problem that arose is that it fundamentally eroded the respect for teachers and their support staff and the other members of the education system. What happened as a result is that we can't have a strong education system if the main players of the system aren't treated with respect. We don't have a starting point. We don't have a system that we can actually look up to. It can't be a system that will perform well. It's not a system that will address the future of our province.

Really, education—and a strong education system—is the key towards creating a more progressive society; a society that's better off, a society that can move with the new circumstances, the new times.

If we talk about the economies that are doing the best in the world, the economies that are the most successful are those that have fully developed their knowledge industry, that have developed their technology and have fully made use of the most fundamental and precious resource: their people. Some of the countries that have done a great job in terms of innovation, that have worked so hard at developing an economy without very many natural resources, but instead recognizing the power of people, have used their intellectual capital, their entrepreneurship, their technological growth. One of the best examples of that is South Korea. If you look at the population and you look at the natural resources and you look at the infrastructure of Korea, when compared to any other country of a similar size and a similar history, they are outperforming by lengths and by strides, and one of the key reasons is that they've realized the importance of developing their technology sector. They've actually developed it so well that they have some of the largest and most effective and most successful corporations and innovators coming out of a country that, for its size and population, is quite small in the scheme of the world. They're punching well above their weight because they've taken advantage of their intellectual capital, their people power. That's something that we can do, and one of the fundamental ways to do that is to make sure you have an education system that rewards and encourages and develops the talents of our youth.

The starting point for creating a strong education system, which will help us move with the times, is having respect. The respect was eroded by Bill 115, and the fundamental way that it was eroded was by undermining a long-held tradition, an important fabric of our charter rights: the ability to organize. One of those rights within the ability to organize is to be able to collectively bargain. By legislating agreements instead of negotiating agreements, the Liberal government fundamentally undermined one of our charter rights and one of our strongly held beliefs.

Bill 122 is a step in the right direction. There are a number of criticisms which I'll get to, but the bill clarifies

the different roles that are required for the system to work. The three basic roles in terms of the process required to get the system going, to negotiate agreements—the three components are the funders, who are the government; we have an employer, which is the school boards; and then we have the employees, who are the teachers and the support staff. Those are the three players. In terms of their roles, it wasn't clear. The crown, or the government, didn't have a formalized place in this system, and now they do.

One of the problems, though, is that although the government now has a position in this—they're a part of this formalized process—they are a participant, but their definition isn't as a party. What that really means, in a practical sense, is because they're not deemed a party, they're not subject to the rules under the Ontario Labour Relations Act. Basically, they're not subject to the rules that govern the proper conduct of all the participants. If you're going to be a part of the discussion, if you're going to be a part of the process, you should have the same responsibilities as the other parties, as well. That's one criticism that I think should be addressed.

The other concern with this bill in terms of the process—and it was brought up by some members of the official opposition; rightly so—is that there are a number of areas where there's too much ministerial discretion, and I echo that sentiment. When we have too much ministerial discretion or too many regulations, what happens is, decisions are made outside of this House that members of this Legislature don't have input on. We've seen the ugly side of this reality in the Public Works Protection Act, where the government, this Liberal government, made changes through regulation that increased police powers and resulted in one of the worst civil rights violations in the history of Ontario: the G20 debacle and the treatment of citizens, the unwarranted arrest of 1,000 individuals who were kept in custody—

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Speak to the bill.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: —and they were not treated with the rights they were due. This is the result of ministerial discretion.

1650

The problem with this bill is that it has a great deal of ministerial discretion. As someone had exclaimed, "Speak to the bill," this is part of the bill: the fact that there is too much ministerial discretion. We need to look at making sure that the discretion doesn't undermine what we do here in the House.

A final point was brought up, and I want to echo it: The funding formula is fundamentally flawed, and this bill doesn't address that. Regions like Peel, which are grossly underfunded, need to have their funding in proportion to their population.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions? The member for Scarborough—Agincourt.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): No? I'm not doing very well this afternoon.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Mississauga East—Cooksville.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Sorry. The member from Mississauga East–Cooksville.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I just want to respond to the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton and say that we've been debating this for a very long time. Every time, certain concerns are expressed, but it's pointless to express these concerns. Instead, why don't we deal with these concerns in committee? If you really want to move forward with this legislation, I urge the House to consider moving this to committee now.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to join the debate and bring some comments on the presentation by my friend from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. I always enjoy hearing what he has to say about the various issues, and he tends to speak quite often here in the Legislature. It's good to bring some commentary to his remarks here on the bill that we're discussing this afternoon.

One of the comments that he made early on in his presentation was that Bill 115 and what happened last fall here in the Legislature and in our schools across the province was fabricated. That may be correct to a certain point, but he went on to say that there was no looming crisis in education. I would beg to differ that there actually is a looming crisis in education. We can't continue to pay what we're paying for education in this province at the rate that we're seeing the bills rise and the struggling economy that we have here in Ontario at this time.

Just this afternoon, there was more evidence that this government is on the wrong path and that we do need to change direction. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development put out a warning this afternoon saying that the Bank of Canada is probably going to have to more than double the interest rates in the province to 2.25%. We talk about it all the time, the fact that the deficits that this government continues to rack up—the multi-billion-dollar deficits—are someday going to come back and bite us, if we don't address these soon. This type of interest rate hike is going to cost us another \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion on the debt that we're paying for right now. That's going to go a long way in causing a crisis in our education system, in our health care system and in every social program that we provide in this province—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Point of order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, I stand on a point of order. My point of order is: On September 19, 2013, in order paper question 317, I inquired of the Minister of Finance to explain the method in which he plans to address, using generally accepted accounting principles, the \$1-billion gap from the 2012 budget to the 2013 Ministry of Finance documents related to the government's planned divestment of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. The Clerk has informed me that this is now overdue.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Minister, I want to remind you that you are required, under standing

order 99(d), to file a response within 24 sessional days. Your response is now overdue, and I would ask that you give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Madam Speaker, I'll be delighted to bring to the attention of the Minister of Finance the intervention this afternoon and determine to have the answer to the question at the earliest possible opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

Further comments and questions?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to make a comment on the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton's presentation. It was an excellent presentation. He got into the rights in the charter of Canadians to have the ability to bargain collectively. I don't believe that this present government honoured that position, and I don't believe the former government honoured those positions.

My biggest fear is that collective bargaining is now being used as a political tool in our province to pressure groups of people to go one way or the other or not at all. Also in collective bargaining, we found that a lot of the legislation has forced them back to work before they had a chance to have collective bargaining. They've ordered the transit workers back. They ordered, I believe, the professors at York back.

Interjection: Postal workers.

Mr. Paul Miller: Yes, and the postal workers. They've done this all over our country. I really believe the Charter of Rights has been infringed on more than one occasion by these last governments, and it continues.

Collective bargaining is a basic right of Canadians. The ability to do collective bargaining is their right, and it has been infringed upon by not just the federal government but also the provincial governments, and that's wrong. These governments have no right to be stepping on the feet of collective bargaining units in this province, using it as a political tool to gain support from the other sectors of our population.

It's wrong; it's wrong-headed. It's moving in the wrong direction. It's setting a precedent in this province for future shutdowns, work stoppages and confrontations outside this building. It's a very sad state of affairs where we're headed. It should be stopped now. They've got to honour collective bargaining. They've got to honour the right of unions to exist and to do their bidding, and they're not doing that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's a pleasure to stand up today to speak about Bill 122. I guess the bottom line is that we need to continue to move forward with education and strengthening it in this province. I know under the Conservative government 10 years ago, when I became a school board trustee—a decade ago actually this month—I got involved because of what the Conservative government was doing in education.

I support any type of improvement in the collective bargaining process here in the province of Ontario

because I know back in 2003 we were really in a tough situation here in Ontario. One out of every three students in the province of Ontario was dropping out of school under the former Harris government. In addition to that, even this building—you couldn't get into this building. There were protests right around the building. You couldn't get in to see anyone who was actually working for the government. People were being locked out.

I think if you actually took the total of lost education days for all the students in the province—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: It was 23 million strike days.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It was 23 million strike days, lost days for our students here in the province of Ontario.

I'm pretty impressed with the improvement we've made over the last 10 years. Collective bargaining, of course, and working with all stakeholders has placed us in a better situation. We know now that one in five students is not successful in our schools, but it's a huge improvement from one in three dropping out. So we are making major gains. We've been recognized internationally for the work we've done in education here in the province of Ontario. We need to continue to invest. Making sure that we get the current relationship with all stakeholders right in this province is the best thing we can do to move forward, and I think Bill 122 does exactly that.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I thank all the members who added their voice to the debate. Thank you for that.

I want to just wrap up with my last two minutes on some of the lasting problems that we can work on, that this bill doesn't really address and that it should address.

One of the fundamental problems in our province when it comes to the education system is the funding formula. That's really at the heart of many, many problems that are facing a great number of communities. Particularly in the Peel region and in my riding, one of the major factors that's impacting our community is the fact that the formula that's being used right now is a formula that's out of date, that doesn't reflect the population. Communities that are booming, in terms of growth, in terms of population, are not getting an amount of funding proportional to their population. It's just fundamentally unfair. It's resulting in a serious shortage in terms of infrastructure and space. It's creating some severe problems.

One of the other issues that is particularly concerning to me, and this bill doesn't address it, is the fact that in communities with new Canadians who need ESL services and ESL programs, while the funding seems to be there—and the need is certainly there, because we know that our population, in terms of new Canadians, is growing and increasing—there aren't the classrooms; there aren't the actual services available. That's an area of question for me. I'm concerned about that, and I know my constituents are concerned about that.

At the heart of it, this bill doesn't address those underlying problems. I'm asking this government to look at that funding formula and make sure it's appropriate, make sure it represents the communities and make sure that it's up to date. I urge you to get to work on that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm pleased to be able to speak to Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

As the second largest ministry in terms of expenditures—it is very important that changes to our education system be examined today. When we consider the precarious condition of the province's finances, we need to examine any changes this government proposes to make, with a fine-tooth comb. I'm glad to be able to be part of that process today, Speaker.

Last year the Ministry of Education spent more than \$22 billion, about \$11,000 per student. Taxpayers have been asked to spend \$8.5 billion more than they were asked to spend in 2003. Meanwhile, we have 250,000 fewer students than 10 years ago.

How will this bill help ensure that we realize value for those taxpayers? How will this bill help us improve the outcomes for Ontario students in an increasingly competitive and global marketplace? How does this bill directly impact some of what ails our education system? We should be talking about fixing what ails our education system, but this bill doesn't do that.

This is a process bill. This bill is about teachers and school boards and governments. What parents and constituents are really concerned about, and what they're contacting my office about, is, "What is my child learning? Why is there duplication in the system? Where is the value for the money? Why is this government imposing its values on my child and my school board?" This is what parents and taxpayers are concerned about when it comes to education policy.

Each piece of legislation needs to be evaluated on how it impacts the quality of education for our students. Sometimes we forget who the education is there to serve. It's to serve the students. That is where we measure our performance. What we should be talking about today is students and their parents and the outcomes. But the government has chosen to talk about process, so now I have to participate in that discussion and do some additional talking about process.

Bill 122 is an education process bill that attempts to undo the impact of the last education process bill, which was Bill 115. Speaker, at the time of Bill 115, the PC caucus proposed a process of our own. It was called an across-the-board wage freeze. If it were followed, we wouldn't be in the predicament we find ourselves in today. Our process was not to pit teachers against nurses against police officers against MPPs and against other public servants. Our process was to recognize the fiscal crisis we are in and take action.

The government had a different process. By singling out teachers, the government chose a process that upset the unions and the school boards, and eventually im-

pacted students and their parents. I mention this, Speaker, because it's important to remind ourselves how we got here to make sure that we can find our way back.

And so we get to the meat of Bill 122: to provide greater clarity to the roles of the different parties in collective bargaining in the education sector. It is appropriate that the government's role in the collective bargaining process will be formalized, as it is in this bill. When the government is spending more than \$20 billion on something, they need to have a say on how that money is spent. Granted, this bill does that.

Of course, no one knows the unintended consequences that will arise out of this bill. No one will completely foresee how Bill 122 will impact all of the stakeholders. It will take at least one round of negotiation to give us some idea of the impacts.

We know that unintended consequences are a common feature of legislation emanating from this government, and we need to account for that. We need to learn from history. Indeed, this very bill itself is a result of the unforeseen consequences of Bill 115. So we must be good economists and good legislators and make provisions for the unseen consequences of Bill 122.

That is why we need to include a provision to review the legislation after one cycle of bargaining is complete. To us, Speaker, that's a very, very important component. This is something that would allow the education partners to give feedback as to what worked and what didn't work, what achieved our aims and what was an unseen and perhaps unwelcome consequence. Most importantly, it would allow a review of the unseen impact on students and on their learning outcomes.

Let's learn from Bill 115. Let's learn from the past so that we don't repeat it. I'm not saying how it has to happen, whether it's a legislative committee or whether it's a ministerial consultation, but I am saying it should happen one way or another.

One area of this bill where I think we could see some unforeseen consequences is where this bill perhaps places on the bargaining table matters that are rightly the purview of the Ministry of Education. If we're going to place regulation 274 and everything else in education policy on the table for negotiation, what are we here for?

I think it's important that we recognize that not everything should be open to negotiation, not everything is up for grabs. We have a responsibility to students and to parents to ensure certain outcomes. We have a responsibility to make sure the hands of school boards are not tied so that they cannot achieve those outcomes. We have to be mindful of all of the stakeholders here, not just those around the bargaining table. If the intent of this bill is to ensure that all aspects of education policy will not be subjected to legislation from this Legislature and can actually be totally removed from this Legislature and only subject to the collective bargaining table, then there are issues that we have with that process.

I also want to speak about the parents. Of all the stakeholders in this process except for the students themselves, parents have the greatest interest in what happens in the

education system. Parents are most affected by the decision we will make on Bill 122. Yet parents have been seemingly shut out of this process and this discussion. They are partners too. I'm concerned that they seem to have very little role in setting the education policy of the province of Ontario. So we need to consult with parents more. We need to include parents more in the process. As we consider Bill 122, we should think about the role of parents and students in the education system and include them among the list of those who we consider partners in our education system.

Speaker, Bill 115, while very flawed, at least demonstrated that the previous Premier and finance minister, though belatedly, seemed to fleetingly recognize that this province is facing a financial crisis.

1710

The government is hoping that by not focusing on the real problem, we can be distracted. The taxpayers and voters will be distracted. I can tell you the bond market will not be distracted. The bond market will not be fooled by process bills. The bond market does not care how much consultation and conversation takes place. They want the government to get serious about its spending problem and so do taxpayers.

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, we're spending \$8.5 billion more on education than we were 10 years ago, and we have 250,000 less students. Are the students benefiting? Are parents benefiting? As my colleague the member from Cambridge outlined in his opening comment on all this, it isn't clear that those 250,000 fewer students are indeed benefiting. There's evidence that the concerns of parents and taxpayers that I hear in my office are valid. There is evidence that simply throwing money at a problem is not a solution, that we need to look for other solutions, actual solutions. When we set education policy, we need to focus on the outcomes to students and their parents. These are our ultimate partners in education. These are whom we are here to represent.

As I come to the close of my arguments on this legislation, I would say, let's recognize what's worthwhile in Bill 122, but let's not forget that education and policy are to be set here, not at the bargaining table. We need to talk about putting regulation 274 back on the table. As the government is putting forward Bill 122, let's remember that this is a result of unforeseen consequences of Bill 115, and let's not repeat that mistake. Let's make provision in the legislation to come back and review, to come back and consult with all of our partners in education to make sure we get it right.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to be able to stand in this House and speak on behalf of residents of Timiskaming-Cochrane and respond to the member from Nipissing.

Several times in this House today we've heard that we're wasting our time debating here and this should go to committee. Although on many occasions I don't agree with the member from Nipissing, he did further this

debate. I think that's something we have to keep in mind, that this is a very important job we fulfill, and when we bring issues to the table, which he has done—it's something we should all remember. It's an important thing.

One of the things that we should also add to the table is that although this is a process bill, process by itself—if you ignore process, like we did, like the other two parties did with Bill 115, because we voted against it—Bill 115 ignored process and tried to shove something down the people's throats, and that's why it failed. That's why process is important, but it's a very small part of the whole education spectrum, and you can't look at it in a vacuum. You can't ignore process because when you ignore it totally, then you get what we had with Bill 115, which was mayhem.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: With reference to education and the deep support and commitment that our government has had for the past 10 years on harmonizing the education system, on building children's futures and preparing them for the world of tomorrow, I would simply offer this observation: that a teacher affects eternity. He can never tell where his influence ends.

In distinction to other governments that have preceded us, whose job it was to foster crises—I call that the Snobelen effect, as you will remember—I think we have gone the extra mile in order to build our children's futures. My colleagues of course have detailed many, many of the different initiatives, but I think we need to move ahead and let's get this legislation passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's always a pleasure to bring comments following the remarks of our finance critic and our member from Nipissing, Mr. Fedeli, who has his finger on the pulse of what's happening in the economy, as you very clearly heard moments ago when he was speaking for 10 minutes on this bill and the situation that we find ourselves in in the province of Ontario.

The fact that we continue to throw money at these problems—it's very clear to me that during the caucus meeting of the government today they would just like to forget that last fall ever happened, and they're trying to remind everybody who is watching this afternoon or anybody who might be following this debate that they're the reason for the chaos in our education system that occurred last fall. They were the ones who designed Bill 115, which caused chaos in our schools.

The member who just spoke in regard to the comments from our member from Nipissing would have you forget that they were responsible for that. It was their government that brought in Bill 115. It was the first glimmer of recognition that we here in the official opposition, saw from this government in 10 years that they had any kind of an idea that there was actually a problem with the financial situation in the province.

Often, you'll hear about hitting rock bottom. Well, we are at rock bottom now. We're at rock bottom. As I

alluded to earlier, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has advised the Bank of Canada that they might have to jack up our interest rates by double, which would cost us another \$2 billion a year in interest paid on our debt. They have created the situation that we find ourselves in. As you heard from our critic for finance, Mr. Fedeli, we're the party, and we are going to be the government, that's going to bail us out.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: That's an interesting comment from the last speaker that they are going to be the government; that remains to be seen. I'm not sure about that.

In reference to the member from Nipissing's comments about parent involvement, I'm not quite sure where he's going with that. I don't know if it's politically expedient for him to mention the parents, but the bottom line is, we do have parent councils. We do have school board trustees. We do have school boards that deal with this daily. People in this Legislature do not deal with educational problems daily. We put down the legislation, but the legislation is always advised through teachers' organizations and through school boards. They come and advise us. I don't think the interference of any government should be allowed at that level. That's why we have collective bargaining, that's why we have school boards, that's why we have trustees and that's why we have parent councils. They know best—not the people sitting in this room.

When the member says that more parents should be involved, a lot of parents are involved as we speak, they are all the time, and they certainly bring their concerns forward to our local representatives, whether it be city council, whether it be the trustee or whether it be the board. That's an ongoing process, and it's a good process. It's a healthy process. It's a democratic process that has been around this province from day one.

I'm really not quite sure where he's trying to get more involvement. We couldn't have any more involvement than we've got now. In fact, sometimes we're overloaded with involvement. There are too many so-called experts in education who aren't experts. Leave it to the people who do it every day. A good general does not tell the guys in the trenches or the captains what to do. He sits at headquarters and passes on an order, but he's not the guy doing the fighting; it's the people in the trenches.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I want to thank the members from Timiskaming–Cochrane, Etobicoke North, Prince Edward–Hastings and Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for their commentary.

Our caucus has tried to work with this government to clear the deck so that we can talk about the economy. We've tried to clear the deck so that we can work with this government to meet head-on the crisis they created: a spending addiction so out of control that we have three times the per capita deficit of California; a debt problem so huge that we are the seventh largest non-sovereign

consumer of debt on the planet. We are here today talking about an education process bill designed to fix the effects of the last education process bill because this government has absolutely nothing to say on economic issues.

As I stated in my most recent Fedeli Focus on Finance, which you can download at www.fedeli.com—you can now download that. It's the Fedeli Focus on Finance concerning the fall economic statement. It's clearer than ever that the government has no plan to balance the budget. For the first time, the government spoke openly about the possibility of not even meeting its own modest deficit reduction targets. While Bill 115 is very flawed, it at least demonstrated on the fringes, and belatedly and almost fleetingly, that the province has a crisis that we're facing, a financial crisis.

1720

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to be able to rise in this House and speak on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming-Cochrane, in this case in regard to the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2013.

As some of the other speakers have stated, this is a bill about process, about wage negotiations within the education system. But you can't speak about that in a vacuum. If you're going to talk about the education system, you have to talk about the system as a whole to put this bill into context.

I think we can all agree, all of us as legislators—I hope we can all agree—that publicly funded education is one of the pillars on which the success of this province is built. I think we can all agree that it's a system under stress. We will disagree as to why and where, but I think we can all agree it's under stress.

I'd like to point out a couple of areas in my northern rural riding where—and who we're talking about here. It's our kids and their education and where the stresses are. A big issue in my riding—it has to do with the funding formula—is the closure of rural schools. It's a constant threat throughout the north and throughout, I think, all rural parts of the province, and probably some urban parts of the province as well, but my riding is all rural. I've had two lately, Charlton-Savard and Cobalt Public, and they've been the latest victims. This has pitted townspeople against the school board trustees, because they blame the school board. In reality, they're both fighting the same enemy. They're fighting because the provincial funding formula does not recognize the role of the small rural school.

The school is the hub of the community, and when it's closed, the fabric of the town starts to fray and sometimes is irreparably damaged. This has happened many times across the north. But the real victims are the students who spend several hours on the bus every day. Parents take a leap of faith every day when they send their kids to school, all parents do. But imagine when your local school is closed and you have to send a six-year-old on

an hour or longer bus ride on northern roads at 30 below. That's not conducive to a good education. In some cases, these children pass by a shuttered school.

Some people will say or think, "Well, why do people live there, then? Why are small towns, why are small schools important?" Well, because rural infrastructure is what this province is built upon—in my riding, the farms, the mines, the mills, the people who work there. They need skilled, quality people. People research where they move to based on the services they can get, based on the hospitals, based on the doctors, based on the education that their young families can get.

If there's no school or if you have to drive or if they have to spend an hour and a half each way on the school bus, it's going to make a determination on whether that plant, that mine or those farms can get the quality, skilled people they need. That's something that the funding formula doesn't recognize. Maybe it's something that the funding formula can't recognize. But somehow in the structure of things it's going to have to be recognized, because it's one of the things that's holding a lot of non-urban businesses back. It's holding a lot of communities back, because there are people who—in my riding, we have jobs. We don't have a jobs shortage. We actually have a shortage of people for some occupations, for skilled occupations. But one of the things holding them back is—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: But they don't pick those communities, because there's no school. It's something we have to get over and understand that.

Another thing: Even in the schools that aren't in trouble or that are still operating and are fairly solid, because of the way the funding formula is structured, there is a severe lack of funding for special-needs kids, people who need special help with language and other special needs. They are not as available in small rural schools as they should be. Once again, when a family is looking for a place to live and the job is there, they're going to look at things like that. That's something that doesn't directly relate to this but it does relate to education, and it does relate to the future of our province and to the prosperity of all parts of our province, because for our province to return to the prosperity that we remember, we are going to have to look at all parts of the province. There is a lot of potential in the rural areas in northern Ontario, but that's one of the things that's holding us back.

Getting back to the bill itself, Speaker, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, it is a bill about process. In itself, that's not a bad thing, because process is one of the things that legislators should discuss, because if you don't get process right, you get big problems; you get mayhem. That's what we got with Bill 115. We got a government bill. I'm not saying that there weren't problems in the payment process or in the school board process, in the negotiations process, but they made it a lot worse by creating a crisis.

Some will say, "Why would they bother creating a crisis? Why would they bother losing the respect of all

the players, not just the unions, but the school boards? Why would they do that?" The sad thing is, they did that for one seat. Why would they do that for one seat, for one by-election? They did that to try to get a majority. That's sad, actually, because a minority Parliament can work. But when you make all your decisions—or, in that case, a huge decision—based on just jockeying to get a majority, that's when you get big problems.

And that led to—again, who were the victims? Who were the victims of that jockeying? All the people involved in the education system, but the biggest victims were the kids: the kids who didn't get extracurricular activities; the kids, basically, whose education suffered because of the lack of—no one knew where they were going at that time. It was a crisis that just—it's hard to explain what happened. My kids were there too, and it was hard to explain. It was hard to tell your constituents what was actually happening, and why it was happening.

This bill, Bill 122—it's funny, if you think about it. Bill 122 has been introduced to fix the problems caused by Bill 115, the problems caused by a bill put forward by the government and proudly supported by—

Interjection: Our friends.

Mr. John Vanthof: —by our friends in the Conservative Party.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Your uncle too.
1730

Mr. John Vanthof: My uncle too—no problem.

So is Bill 122 an improvement over Bill 115? Yes, because I think this one does attempt to respect the collective bargaining process and this one does officially put everyone at the table. Are there problems with the bill? Yes. Should this bill go to committee? Yes. But should this bill be fully discussed in this House by everyone who wants to talk and everyone who feels they can bring something different to the table? Because, Speaker, I have been listening to this, sitting here in the House and also watching in my office, and everyone has brought something different to the table. That's our job, and that's something we should hold very dear. This bill should be brought forward to committee, but it should be fully discussed here so that we can bring the best changes we can in committee to serve the people we should be serving here, the future of our province: the students of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I want to thank the member for his comments, but I think we do have a bit of revisionist history going on here this afternoon.

This bill addresses the problem that was created when the Conservative government of Mike Harris removed taxation rights from school boards. We have never, ever since then had a proper collective bargaining system in the school board sector.

For the first time since Mike Harris changed the law, we actually now have legislation that provides a role for all the players at the table. The government will be there as the funder of the system, the school boards will be

there as the employer, and the unions, of course, will be representing the workers.

I think we need to get on with it. The member was absolutely correct when he said that we need to get the bill into committee, because that's where we can discuss any fine-tuning. So we just need to get this second reading on the road and get it out of here.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to join the debate again. I've had an opportunity to speak a number of times here this afternoon on this bill and I've neglected a very important bit of news, Madam Speaker. My wife is a high school teacher and a member of the OSSTF at Moira Secondary School in east end Belleville. And for the second straight year, the Moira senior Trojans are going to be playing in the National Capital Bowl. The big game is this Saturday afternoon at noon at Centennial Secondary School, which is their archrival. I'm not exactly sure why they're playing there, but they have a nice turf field, so maybe that's it. They are going for their second straight National Capital Bowl on Saturday. So good luck to the Moira Trojans and coach Dwayne Lambert, and Dave Corbett and all that crew.

Anyway, my wife is a great teacher. She was upset by what the government did back in September of last year. And they seem to forget that they are the government; they are the ones that are responsible for bringing Bill 115 to the floor of this Legislature. They want to talk about stuff that happened 15 years ago, but they're completely forgetting the fact, Madam Speaker, that the Liberal Party of Ontario has been governing this province for the last 10 years and they keep digging that hole deeper and deeper. They've spent \$8.5 billion more on education since they took office, for 250,000 fewer students. And that money isn't going into football programs at Moira. That money isn't going into music programs. That money isn't going into improving the curriculum for the students in our schools. That money is almost 100% going into the pockets of members of the Working Families coalition, Madam Speaker. That's the bottom line. That's why we have this bill today and that's why they're trying to distance themselves from what they did last fall.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I must say that every time I'm in this House I certainly get the odd shock. This was certainly another shock. I do believe Bill 115—who voted for that? Oh, the Liberals and the Conservatives. So your wife must have been mad at you too. We voted against it. I just wanted to clarify that for the viewers today.

Secondly, I can't believe they throw rocks at each other. I do remember the Harris days because my wife's a teacher too. Believe me, you are not high on her list of favourite parties.

I can safely say, though, when I listened to the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane talk, he certainly hit on some points that are very important about rural schools. Rural schools are not just schools; they are community

centres. They are used for after-hours things: for dances, for basketball, for floor hockey. It's a very important cog in the wheel of rural life. And when we close them, and force our kids to take three- and four-hour bus rides in the morning to school and then back, they spend more time on the bus than they do in the classroom. By the time they get to school, they're half asleep. So I think a little bit of organizational changes, a little bit of common sense, could prevail in rural schools and rural communities, and they don't.

You want to talk about urban centres. Let's talk about Hamilton, one of the largest cities in Ontario. You're closing one third of our high schools, because we can't afford to keep them open on this funding formula. It's brutal. I don't know why the government would be waving the flag of victory. When you take a look at Hamilton schools, our board gets slaughtered with not enough financing. A lot of it goes to Toronto, but they sometimes forget about the other cities that are large in Ontario that need help too. We have to get a handle on the big picture, folks, because we certainly don't have it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to thank the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane for his remarks. I totally agree: Publicly funded education is our most important responsibility as legislators for our children.

There's a lot of fodder this afternoon to continue on. The fact of the matter is, we've had nine hours of debate—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Not enough.

Mr. John Fraser: Apparently, from that side, that's what I'm hearing.

We've had nine hours of debate. We all agree on this.

So the second point I agree with the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane on is that minority governments can work. Let's just get this bill to committee so minority governments can work.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Timiskaming-Cochrane has two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Vanthof: First of all, I'd like to thank the Minister of Education, the member from Prince Edward-Hastings, the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek and the member from Ottawa Centre—

Mr. Paul Miller: Ottawa South.

Mr. John Vanthof: Ottawa South—my apologies.

First, to the Minister of Education: I agree. A lot of this problem started when the Harris government took away the ability of the school boards to tax and took a lot of the money out—that's where a lot of the problems started. But the temperature of the problem was increased a lot with Bill 115.

To the member from Prince Edward-Hastings: Go, Trojans! But, in a minority Parliament, it takes two parties to pass a bill. For Bill 115, if we voted against and you voted against, Bill 115 wouldn't have happened. So it takes two in a minority Parliament—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: But on Bill 115, you were the proppers of mayhem.

For the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, I'd like to thank him for his remarks. I agreed with everything he said.

The member from Ottawa South, if you really look at the big picture—and to the folks at home, we're talking about billions of dollars—whether it takes nine hours or 15 hours or 20 hours, in the big picture, if we can make one thing better with those extra hours, is that really—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: I think every member here has brought something forward that might not be brought forward in committee, and if you don't believe that, why are you sitting here?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Before I start my debate, I just wanted to make an announcement: My spouse is not a teacher. I think I'm about the only one in this building today whose spouse is not a teacher.

I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this bill. I do want to commend my colleague from Cambridge for his work on this education file. I kind of admire him because he is such a critical thinker. He has jumped into this file with both feet and has made some very pertinent comments in this House regarding education in general and, in particular, this bill.

1740

Every time I hear him talk on the subject, it's clear that—as he himself is a former educator—the education of our young people is something he's passionate about. It's refreshing to take on our education system because, at the end of the day, the education of our children is vitally important to our economic competitiveness.

The apparatus by which we deliver education to our children, the body responsible for ensuring every child is able to reach their full potential, is the Ministry of Education. To provide some perspective on the scope and scale of our education system, let's consider a few facts. As of 2012-13, the number of students in Ontario was 2,031,205. That's a lot of children; it's also a lot of families that directly interact with our educational system.

Bill 122 talks a lot about education stakeholders—the teachers, the support workers. But it is as a parent—families with children in our education system comprise one of the largest stakeholder groups, and any piece of legislation must take into account their needs and requirements. The ministry is responsible for delivering something of value to Ontario.

The end resource we expect the ministry to produce is an educated group of young people. The quality of this process is measured by how well our children are educated in relation to the rest of the world. To produce this mass of educated young people, the ministry oversees 3,978 elementary schools and 913 secondary schools. The budget for education is \$21 billion, with a total capital investment of \$1.4 billion, which makes it the second-largest line item in the provincial budget. This is a very big ministry, and it's an important ministry.

Certainly from the PC perspective, we have expressed deep concern over the fiscal mismanagement of this government because we feel it threatens vital services like health and education. By the same token, for a ministry that spends as much money as the Ministry of Education, we want to make sure that we're getting a bang for the buck, a return on our investment.

When I say "a return on our investment," I'm not referring to simple money in and money out. A well-educated and skilled workforce generates many difficult-to-quantify benefits for our economy and society as a whole. Education as an investment is arguably the most important for the future of our province. For us legislators, it's imperative that we demand high performance from our education system, particularly when the investment is so large and there is so much at stake.

I will discuss the notion of return on our education dollars in a few minutes because I think it's important and also speaks to the underwhelming aim of Bill 122, which in essence is nothing more than a process bill.

What I want to do right now is frame the debate around Bill 122 in the way my colleague from Cambridge did when he spoke about the bill a few weeks ago. A few weeks back, our party helped push forward a programming motion to clear the decks on some legislation that we all agreed on. The purpose of this was to allow the government to come forward with substantive legislation and policy to help bolster the strength of our economy.

As I've mentioned previously, education is a key piece to the long-term strength and competitiveness of our economy. It is the foundation on which we built a vibrant and prosperous economy. So a substantial education bill is certainly something that fits into our overall theme and vision for this province.

What metrics should we use to evaluate the substance of an education bill and whether it fits into this overall scheme? Again, I defer to my thoughtful colleague from Cambridge, who has laid out two simple metrics on which to evaluate the quality of an educational bill.

First, we need to judge each piece of legislation based on how it improves test scores and quality of education of our students, as well as how it respects and allows our front-line educators to perform their job of providing quality education.

Second, since we've established that parents are one of the largest stakeholders in our education system, any proposed legislation must defer to them. It's important to consider what the parents are saying about a particular policy issue as they interact with the system every day.

So how does Bill 122 stack up against these evaluation metrics? It's pretty clear that this bill has absolutely nothing to do with the actual front-line education of our children. There's no program or curricular change that really impacts anything on that front. As for the parent input in the case of the collective bargaining process, it's virtually non-existent.

While I'm here, I'd like to talk a little bit more about parental input. During the public fights that occurred over

Bill 115, the debate that certainly dominated the headlines was between the province and the teachers' unions. Very simply, when it came to the province-wide agreements, they were the main players on either side of the bargaining table.

However, I'm sure that everyone here, like me, was inundated with many calls from parents in our ridings expressing their frustrations, opinions and ideas during that process. Whatever side of the debate these parents fell on—and there were plenty on both sides, I might add—they spoke solely from the perspective of the quality of their children's education. They speak from this perspective because they have the biggest, most singular stake in the game: to ensure that their children reach their full potential. Yet this collective voice gets relegated to the back burners, partly because they have no formal seat at the table.

Bill 122 defines its education partners narrowly to include the ministry, the teachers' federations and the school boards, yet the parents who sit on their children's school council are not considered a partner. So it is clear that our second metric to evaluate the substance of an education bill is not met.

At this point, let me be clear: I think it's a positive development to formalize the province's role in the collective bargaining process. The taxpayer must ultimately foot the bill for an agreement reached, and therefore it makes sense to have the province as a formal part of the process.

However, because this bill doesn't meet our two key requirements, it's noticeably underwhelming. It doesn't provide any measure that explicitly improves education. It effectively amounts to a change in the negotiation process—which, by the way, is a positive thing. However, considering the challenges our province faces economically, challenges that we intended this government to seriously address after passing that programming motion, this bill does not really measure up.

I'm starting to see a pattern here. Bill 105 is similar to Bill 122 in that it was introduced following the programming motion. It's a ministry bill and is intended as, or at least being sold as, a bill to address the monumental economic challenges Ontario faces. Bill 105, the Ministry of Finance's bill that will raise the health tax exemption for small businesses, is a bill we do support. However, when I spoke to Bill 105, I tried to lay out the disconnect between the bill's stated purpose of kick-starting private sector job creation and the fact that the total tax savings from the bill would only amount to \$975 per year, on average, for every single business. Again, it was a measure we supported, but we feel it is woefully inadequate to actually get the 600,000 people unemployed back to work.

That's what we have with Bill 122. It's a bill that we do think is a positive, albeit small, step. It doesn't enhance the front-line quality of our education and it doesn't bring the biggest stakeholder, the parents, into the fold.

This pattern of minor policy tweaks essentially amounts to the government getting into the boxing ring

with the issues facing our province. The only problem is that our government is a lightweight and the issues are major heavyweights. This is a missed opportunity, because with a more substantial bill we would be debating ideas on how to improve our education system. That's where education debates should be held.

Today, the Ministry of Education is spending \$8.5 billion more a year than in 2003. However, the most recent OECD data shows that Ontario's performance in mathematics has declined and we are now in 12th place. Mathematics education is becoming increasingly more vital in our digital age, and I think the member from Trinity-Spadina made the suggestion of having dedicated math teachers in the classroom to ensure the highest quality of education. I think that's a good idea and an idea worth having a discussion about. However, this bill doesn't afford us the opportunity to talk about ideas like this, ideas that are actually geared to enhancing the quality of education we provide our young people.

This brings me back to my original argument: Education is a vital investment, one for which the taxpayer provides a substantial sum of money and one in which the stakes are incredibly high. Debating the quality of the education relative to the dollars we spend is a worthy debate, a debate that has implications for the future of our education policy and our economy.

Given our shaky performance in various international studies, it is even more important that we focus our precious time here in the Legislature debating ways to increase our test scores and therefore enhance our overall educational process.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions.

Mr. Paul Miller: I appreciate the comments from the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London. However, the bottom line is this: We can stand here and criticize the education system in our province. We can criticize our test scores. We can do all these things, but I would ask the member: What are you going to do to fix it? Are you going to fix it just by legislation, or is it going to cost more money?

He calls it a vital part of our system. Well, the system needs more money. The funding formula is wrong. Too many schools are closing. Now he's questioning our test scores. Is it our teachers? Is it the curriculum? Is it the management? Is it the ministry? He's not narrowing it down to where the actual problems are that we can fix. But when you fix things, it costs money. So I don't know where the official opposition is going to get the money to throw more money into education when we've got, as he said, 600,000 people out of work.

1750

So you can't have your cake and eat it too. You're going to create jobs, you're going to improve the education system, and you want to improve the health system. Well, my friend, it all costs money. So when you come out with a fiscally responsible way to finance all these criticisms that you have, I'll be watching and listening.

I just got a form here; I believe it's called the Fedeli Focus on Finance. Well, let's have a look at Miller Money Management. What I'm saying is, I think that we can all play a role, Speaker, in improving these situations, but everyone seems to forget that no matter what you do, it costs money. When you're born, it costs money, you pay taxes, and when you die, it costs you money. So when they figure that one out, they'll be ahead of the game.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to begin by taking to task, or, I should say, asking the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane if you understand the process of legislation. You keep saying that if we could just make the bill better—and that somehow arguing this endlessly here in this chamber would help you make the bill better. But the fact of the procedure is, the first chance we're going to get to make amendments is not going to be in the Legislature; it's going to be when that bill gets to committee. We cannot change this bill, even if we wanted to, as long as it's being debated here. So if you are really, really serious and you get the process—

Interjections.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: No, he said that. He said—

Interjections.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: No, no. I know exactly what I'm doing. All right.

It's a lesson for both the Tories and the NDP. How about that?

If you guys are really serious about making this a better bill, you ought to know you can't do this by arguing this. We've already argued it for 10 hours. Arguing it for the 11th hour won't make it better. The first chance we are going to get to fix it is going to be in committee, so if you are serious about it, let's get it to committee.

Otherwise, to all the viewers, all I can say is, they are playing games, they are playing politics, because you cannot make it a better bill here by arguing—

Interjections.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: —you have to get it to committee. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's always so wonderful to be here at the 10-to-6 hour. It tends to get a little more fun around this place, and it's kind of—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You should have been here at 10 to midnight in the old days.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes, I'll bet the old days were even more fun.

I want to comment on the member's 10-minute speech. He talked about the fact, and he opened the door to the fact, that our party has cleared the decks to be able to talk about jobs and the economy. We got rid of the tanning bed legislation—all very important legislation. The tanning bed, the door-to-door salespeople—we got rid of all of these.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: What about Bill 105?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Oh, I'm coming to 105. Don't worry.

We got rid of all of these, albeit important, bills that don't really drive the economy or have anything to do with creating jobs. We did that, and what do we see? The first bill that comes out from this government, after we cleared the decks so that there are no impediments in the way of talking about creating jobs and putting people back to work, was a bill to create a 1-800 number for animals. Again, it's a very important bill; however, not the kind of bill we cleared the decks for to create jobs in the economy—a 1-800 hotline for animals. Following quickly on its heels was the bill about smoking on patios—again, a very, very important bill. There's no question that there is a time and a place for these. But we've cleared the decks, Speaker, for these.

When they did finally bring a bill that may remotely have something to do with jobs and the economy, Bill 105, which we supported, they sent it to the wrong committee. Which committee did they send it to? Well, they did not send it to the finance committee. Instead, they sent it to the wrong committee. There's something wrong over there.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to be able to stand in the House today. I was going to comment on the speech made by the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: However—

Mr. John Vanthof: —However, I would like to respond, through you, Speaker, to the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville. I very well understand the process. I was elected by the people of Timiskaming–Cochrane to bring forward their views in this House. I do so at every opportunity.

Although this is a process bill, it's about education. Rural schools are very important in my riding. The fact that we can't get qualified people to come work in my riding because schools are closing is an extremely important issue in my riding. The fact is there are kids in my riding that can't have access to speech therapy. Someone comes and says, "Oh, yes. You need this service, but we can't provide it. We will see you three months from now." Those are things that have to be brought up in this House.

The reason I'm responding to the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville and not to the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London is because the issues have to be brought up in this House. I will continue to do that as long as I remain elected. I will always speak, at every opportunity, to the people on behalf of the people of Timiskaming–Cochrane.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for London–Middlesex—

Interjection: Elgin–Middlesex–London.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): —Elgin–Middlesex–London has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to thank the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for his comments. I would like to thank the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville, even though she didn't really talk to me at all. It's all right; they haven't gotten my riding right all day. It's good. Member from Nipissing, thank you for your fine comments. Member for Timiskaming–Cochrane, you're the famous one that everyone wants to speak to. Maybe my final comments should be to you. However, I do stand with you on the fact of rural schools and the issues they're having.

It's not just a northern Ontario problem. I've got the French immersion school in my city of St. Thomas for the whole county of Elgin. We have one there, and it has been overcrowded because it's getting more popular to go to French immersion. Parents just got a note this week stating that if you live outside of St. Thomas from westward to the edge of Elgin county, next year all those kids that go to that school are now going to be put on an hour-long bus ride to Strathroy, which is out of my riding. It goes to Mr. McNaughton's riding. They're taking them to Strathroy because they have no plans on how to deal with the overcrowding, which they should have been working on years ago. But leadership comes from the top.

Mr. John Vanthof: The issue should be brought up in this House.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: It will be brought up in this House. I just thought it would be a pre-message in this debate today.

However, I do want to make a note that I didn't get to in my speech. I think a sunset clause does need to be added to this legislation so that we can review how well this legislation is going to work after the next round of negotiations. It's no use walking away from this legislation after it's done and then dealing with it five or six years down the road. If it's a failure, let's deal with it after the next round of negotiations. Put that sunset clause in there. It forces the government of the day, which I'm pretty sure is not going to be those across the way over there, to deal with a new form of collective bargaining and ensure that it's properly vetted out for the province of Ontario.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order number 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

PAN AM GAMES

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the minister responsible for the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games. The member has up to

five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister may reply for up to five minutes.

1800

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I would like to thank the minister for attending the late show and helping me out with my response.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise and address the inadequacy with which the minister of the Pan Am Games answered a question of mine two weeks ago during question period. I asked a simple question, a question that, quite frankly, given the record of this Liberal government's way of managing major projects, was reasonable. My question came from an exchange that I and my colleague had with the Minister of Transportation in the estimates committee.

We were questioning the minister on various things, and I asked, what was the budgeted cost for the Pan Am transit plan? As most of you know, the Union Pearson Express is a multi-million-dollar project whose completion is intended to coincide with the beginning of the Pan Am Games. This is a major project under the Pan Am Games transit plan. However, there are also a number of other smaller projects intended to meet the transit needs of the Pan Am Games.

My question regarding the total cost for these projects was met with a response that was, quite frankly, shocking and disappointing. He told me that he could not give an indication of what the total cost of such a transit plan will be. He went further and said that, with this project, he likely wouldn't have an idea of the final cost until well after the Pan Am Games. That is unconscionable to me. A vague ballpark figure would have been better than nothing. If he had pulled a number out of the air, it would have demonstrated that he had given more thought to the cost than he did.

The reason I take this so seriously is that I'm a taxpayer. Like everyone else in this province, I pay a chunk of my income, and my pharmacy pays a chunk of its income, to the government every year. It is the government's responsibility to direct these funds reasonably, honestly and transparently.

When I was working at my pharmacy before I became an MPP, I understood that money just didn't grow on trees. There was a very real system of money that came in and money that went out. Consequently, I would work hard every year with the employees at my pharmacy to develop a budget for the upcoming year. The actual figures at the end of the year could be higher or lower, but the budget figures provided a guide and target that we aimed to meet, because if we couldn't achieve our cost targets, we would lose money, and there was no magic source that we could tap for more money. Maybe that's why the Minister of Transportation didn't think he even needed a basic ballpark budget for the Pan Am transit plan: Regardless of what the cost will be, he thinks he can just go back to the taxpayer and ask for more.

So anyway, I was dissatisfied with the Minister of Transportation's dismissive attitude towards what I consider a very important function of government: proper

budget planning. But I figured, okay, this is the transit plan for the Pan Am Games, so maybe the minister of the Pan Am Games will have some idea of what the costs would be. That is why I posed my question to the minister of the Pan Am Games the other week. I figured that maybe, just maybe, the responsibility for the multi-million-dollar budget for Pan Am transit fell under his ministry. However, I was disappointed again.

The Minister of Tourism offered about as little information as the Minister of Transportation when it came to the budget for the Pan Am transit plan. If I can remind everyone, we're talking about millions and millions and millions of dollars, dollars that are collected from paycheques of Ontarians, paycheques that the average Ontarian works hard for, works long hours for and, in some cases, misses quality family time for.

People work hard for their money, and the very least the government could do is respect the money they collect from Ontarians by making decisions to spend that money wisely. But without a budget, I don't see how this is possible.

If what the Minister of Transportation said to me in committee about not knowing the cost of the transit plan until after the games are completed is true, he seems to imply that the budget process is too difficult. Do you know what I say to that? Tough. Budgeting is not an easy process, but it's necessary. It's necessary to set targets, and it's necessary to measure results.

Just by the scope and scale of all the cost overruns and hidden budgets that have emerged regarding Pan Am Games so far, I don't think I'm being unreasonable to demand that this government shape up and show me a budget for the Pan Am Games transit plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister has up to five minutes to respond.

Hon. Michael Chan: I'm pleased to rise in the House to state for the record key facts about the costs of the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games, as the member opposite and his colleagues seem to be acting shocked and ignorant over facts that have been stated publicly and clearly numerous times since 2009.

Our government is committed to putting on the most transparent multi-sport games ever. Ontario, as the host jurisdiction, has various responsibilities. When a host jurisdiction responsibility is confirmed, we have stated it openly and publicly.

A good example is the athletes' village. From the beginning in 2009, we said this investment, as is common practice, would be a host jurisdiction responsibility and not part of the TO2015 organizing committee's budget to stage and deliver the specifics of the games. The opposition critic even acknowledged this fact in a news release this past spring. However, he continues to be shocked that it is a separate provincial investment.

In August, I was pleased to announce our \$42-million promotion, celebration and legacy strategy to extend the benefits of hosting the games to all in Ontario. Last month, as part of the PCL strategy, the Premier and I announced our \$3.5-million expansion of Ontario's trails

network. I am surprised that, similar to the case of the athletes' village, our opposition colleagues chose not to read a news release and instead claimed, again, ignorance.

Ontario, as a host jurisdiction, has many responsibilities, like a contribution of \$500 million to the TO2015 organizing committee's \$1.4-billion budget. The federal government, municipal governments and others also contribute. Another responsibility as a host jurisdiction is to establish a provincial office to oversee the government's investment in the games, as is normal practice. Another responsibility of Ontario as a host jurisdiction is to make appropriate and necessary investments in security and transportation.

Speaker, games planning is complex and large in scope, particularly when the games' footprint stretches across 14 municipalities. The Ministry of Transportation is working closely with the secretariat, the TO2015 organizing committee, Metrolinx, 14 host local governments and security planners to develop an integrated transportation plan to keep people moving and provide safe and efficient travel during the games.

Security planning is led by an integrated security unit of the Ontario Provincial Police, composed of municipal, federal and provincial policing partners. Our priority is to protect the safety of our athletes, visitors and residents, and we will be prepared to take any measures necessary to ensure their safety. Premature speculation of costs and plans undermines a very complex undertaking and hurts our credibility on the international stage.

Ontario is well ahead in the planning stages when compared to other host jurisdictions whose plans were typically finalized 12 to 18 months prior to the games. We are committed to making these the most open and transparent games. Our government brought the organizing committee under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. We require senior executives to publicly disclose their salaries on a yearly basis, and we will continue to communicate our progress on the games to the public.

The false numbers that the opposition critic continues to suggest will hurt the games, hurt businesses, hurt Ontario jobs, hurt partnerships and trade, and hurt our cultural and economic ties with 41 PASO nations. Statements like these are disrespectful, dampen the spirit of our athletes and serve to diminish the legacy of the games. We look forward to hosting the world in 2015 and hope that our opposition colleagues can rise above the political games and join us in celebrating all of the benefits—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. That concludes the time available.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Premier on the

closing of the Heinz plant in Leamington. You have five minutes.

1810

Mr. Rick Nicholls: On November 18—that would have been yesterday—I actually had addressed the Premier during question period with regard to the closing of the H.J. Heinz Co. in Leamington. Unfortunately, I was very dissatisfied with the response she had provided me.

When we take a look at Heinz, Heinz announced last Thursday that it would be closing after 104 years of business in Leamington and the surrounding area. They were all stunned. Also, though, I see filling in for the Premier this evening is the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. In truth, I do appreciate his efforts, because in fairness, and I always am one to give credit where credit is due, he did reach out to me on the Thursday—and I thank you for that—shortly after we had heard. I was in between media calls and happened to receive the minister's phone call. I do appreciate his efforts and his call.

But again, after one of the most significant and devastating events in my riding's history, the people of Chatham-Kent-Essex looked to the Premier, who performs a double duty as Minister of Agriculture and Food, and they waited for a response. They heard nothing. Instead, they watched as she scrambled to score what we would call "press" by commenting on the city of Toronto's current issues. But yesterday, I did call on the Premier for action. I'd hoped for some specifics on what the province would do to help the people of Leamington who are losing their livelihoods.

I also handed her a letter by hand which I will now read into the record. It states:

"Dear Premier Wynne,

"Last week my community of Leamington suffered a devastating blow when Heinz announced that they are closing their plant after 104 years. The economic impact will be far-reaching when you factor in the job losses, damage to the supply chain and contracts of local tomato farmers.

"On a day when over 740 full-time—and another 350 seasonal—"employees learned they were losing their jobs, you chose instead to focus on Toronto mayor Rob Ford. This is particularly upsetting given that you have chosen to be the Minister of Agriculture and Food, and the closure of the plant, one of our largest food processors, will have a huge impact on farmers in our area.

"Because this issue requires immediate attention, I ask that you"—and I will cite the four major points:

"(1) Come to Leamington by the end of the year to meet with the hundreds of employees and farmers who are losing their livelihood;

"(2) Have the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities set up a briefing as soon as possible to talk to workers and provide information on programs to help them with retraining and other options:

“(3) Have the Ministry of Agriculture and Food set up a briefing as soon as possible for our farmers to provide information on alternative crops and to talk about programs to help them transition; and

“(4) Take immediate action to change your government’s policies that contributed to Heinz deciding to close the plant, such as the spiralling cost of hydro and the increasing red tape, so that our other businesses can grow and no other community will go through what we are experiencing.

“Premier, this closure will impact every part of our community. Not only was the plant a major employer for the entire area, it resulted in thousands of spinoff jobs. It contributed significantly to” the municipality of Leamington’s “government’s revenue and their ability to deliver services. It was a market for our tomato growers and a vital part of our agriculture ministry.

“I ask that, as soon as possible, you take the four steps outlined above to help our community as we start trying to look towards the future.”

Speaker, that was a letter I hand-delivered to the Premier just yesterday.

I realize that question period isn’t always the best place to get detailed answers to issues, so I wanted to give the Premier 24 hours to go over the details of my letter and question. While I realize that she’s very busy, it’s unfortunate that she is not here this evening to address the question directly. I’m sure that the people of Leamington, as well as the rest of my constituents in Chatham–Kent–Essex, are disappointed by the fact that the Premier was a no-show, after failing to address the issue last Thursday. I don’t want it to sound like she could be running from—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Excuse me, but you cannot refer to someone’s absence.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I retract that statement; my apologies.

In closing, I’d like to speak on behalf of my constituents. I call on the Premier to—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We’ve run out of time. I’d ask for a response. Thank you.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As the parliamentary assistant to the Premier, I want to thank the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex for all his efforts and all his concern. I know he is deeply concerned. I know this is not an easy situation for the people of Leamington, and I know that the Premier shares his concern. As she said yesterday, she’s very disappointed with Heinz’s decision to close its Leamington operations in mid-2014 as part of a broader, company-wide operational review that impacts plants in the United States as well as the Leamington facility.

I will try my best to convey the Premier’s comments this evening for you.

The agri-food industry in the Leamington area and the workers at Heinz have made a significant contribution to Heinz and to Ontario’s economy over the years, and we’re all well aware of that. This government’s first concern is for the workers, the growers and the families

affected by the Heinz decision. We will ensure that Leamington and the surrounding area are taking full advantage of regional economic development programs and other provincial supports.

Multiple ministries are working together on the ground to ensure that the community is supported through this very difficult time.

I know that the Ministry of Agriculture and Food’s rapid response team is working with the growers on the ground. Over the weekend, local OMAF staff were in Leamington to participate in meetings with affected stakeholders, to hear community concerns and to work with officials to determine what’s needed to address those concerns.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities is working to set up a community service action plan. They have been in contact with all of the local service providers to ensure that they’re geared up and prepared for the closure in June.

The Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment is working with local business leaders and city officials to answer any questions they may have, as well as encouraging them to apply for regional funds.

Ontario has a strong, reputable agri-food sector. The Premier has been working, and will continue to work, with industry, with AMO and with the alliance of food processors to help the food processing industry grow and seize new market opportunities at home and globally.

The federal decision to review regulations around standardized container sizes has not helped Ontario’s business environment. Should the proposed changes be implemented, they could make the province less attractive to existing companies and potential international investors. The Premier has raised this government’s and stakeholders’ concerns with her federal counterpart, Minister Ritz, on numerous occasions. Most recently, the Premier raised this issue at the November meeting of the Council of the Federation.

The industry has warned that moving in this direction will have dire consequences for the ongoing competitiveness of the food processing and packaging sectors in Ontario, including job losses, business closures and lack of investment.

The Ontario government has provided \$50,000 in funding to the University of Windsor to develop an economic impact analysis, providing a better understanding of the impacts.

Across the value chain, Ontario’s agri-food sector employs more than 700,000 people and generates \$34 billion in economic activity for our province’s economy, and that is very significant. Ontario is home to one of North America’s largest food processing sectors, with 3,000 businesses that employ more than 95,000 people, and I have some of them in my own riding.

Hon. Michael Chan: Those are big numbers.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Yes. Food processing in Ontario is really a vital industry.

This government sees the agri-food industry not just as an important subsector but as a major factor in Ontario’s

economy, a driving force that has the full support of our government. Our government is going to invest in people, invest in infrastructure and create a dynamic and innovative business climate where agri-food businesses can succeed. In turn, the Premier has made a personal commitment to do what she can to help the industry to reach their targets as both Premier and Minister of Agriculture and Food. As the government, we will focus our support on those who contribute to this vision and focus on growth.

1820

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Kenora–Rainy River has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Transportation concerning lack of highway maintenance in northwestern Ontario. The member has up to five minutes.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you, Speaker. As you just mentioned, earlier today I did raise the issue of highway maintenance and the problems we've had right across northwestern Ontario this winter—not just this winter but the problems that we had last winter and how that has really affected people living their day-to-day lives in northwestern Ontario.

I want to thank the parliamentary assistant for coming here tonight. It's a very important issue, and I appreciate you taking the time to talk about it. I do hope that you will bring back some of the concerns I raise tonight to the minister.

On that note, I should also mention that, even though I am here to express a bit of dissatisfaction with the answer I received, I was encouraged to hear that it is a priority for the minister. He expressed an interest in coming to Kenora–Rainy River to meet with, he said, the contractors. We do have multiple contractors, and I would like to set up that meeting as soon as possible.

I'd also like to have a bit of a disclaimer. I don't want to paint all contractors with the same brush. We have some contractors who are doing a relatively good job in Kenora–Rainy River. We have other contractors—one in particular has the contract for the largest part of my riding and is very seriously and very obviously not doing a very good job. It's unfortunate, but what we need to do is we need to have a discussion to make sure that we have that particular contractor living up to its obligations.

I also want to say, too, that this is a serious issue. This is not an issue that I'm trying to score any political points with. It's something that, quite simply, my office has been flooded with. When I'm going about the riding, attending events and talking to people, it's one of the single biggest issues that I've been hearing right now: that people are afraid to go out onto the highway. There are so many people who live outside of city centres, and they have to commute just to come in to medical appointments, get groceries, go to work. They're afraid to do that.

This past week, in the constituency break, I went to Kenora twice. I went to Fort Frances twice. I went to Rainy River. I went to Emo. I probably put close to 3,000 kilometres on my car. It's just me, and I've travelled all these roads. I can say that we had a little bit of freezing rain that happened about November 9 or 10. Travelling on Highway 502 exactly one week later, we still had that same amount of ice. The only ice that had dissipated a bit was just because of the weather. We're hearing stories from people who know people who work for Transfield Services that Highway 502 is just not a priority, and we're hearing of more and more of these cases. I've heard that there was a total of 10 collisions, and I've heard it's as high as 15, between the Manitoba border to Vermillion Bay and Ignace, and that's just with a little bit of snow.

Highways have been closed for hours and hours on end, and when they do open up, people are expecting those roads to be navigable, and what they're experiencing is just a horrifying situation.

As I mentioned earlier, there seems to be a lack of foresight. There doesn't seem to be work that's being done proactively on the roads. For instance, salt isn't being put down when the contractors and anybody living in the north knows that there's going to be a problem. They're not taking advantage of that small window where the weather is warm enough where they can use some salt or they can start using some sand. That would oftentimes head off the issue before it really becomes an issue.

I've heard from a lot of people that last year was the worst year in history in my riding, and this is coming from people who are quite accustomed to bad road conditions. It's not normal and it's not acceptable to have things like 14 transports that are involved in a pileup. Just imagine if there was a car in the middle of that mix; it wouldn't work out very well at all. These are some of the issues that people have raised.

As I said, there was really bad weather over the last couple of days. I have three staff who work in my Dryden office; two of them were not able to come in to work because of the road conditions. One staff was able to, and she said she was inundated all day long by people calling from across the region.

My point is simply that people are frustrated and that the system doesn't work—the system of self-policing. I think that's probably the biggest piece, in addition to the fact that these contractors are in it to make money and so they're cutting corners and they're not putting down the salt and they're not putting down the sand as they should be.

I look forward to the minister coming up to Kenora–Rainy River and sitting down with myself and a contractor. I look forward to that happening as soon as possible, and I hope that the minister will contact me right away.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The parliamentary assistant has up to five minutes.

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to thank the member from Kenora–Rainy River. I think she has brought this forward in a very sincere and very positive way. I know she is really speaking on behalf of her constituents, who have every right to be concerned about road safety, considering the conditions that mean life or death for people. It is a very, very serious issue, and I certainly guarantee to her that I will pass on, in person, your concerns to the minister.

I know that we've been dealing with, in fact, some of the winter service levels in estimates, because the Minister of Transportation is before us. I know that when the member from Timmins–James Bay was talking about road conditions up his way in Attawapiskat and so forth, I asked that the maps be brought to the committee so we knew what the member was talking about. I find that very helpful. He mentioned Highway 502, I guess basically from Highway 11 up to Dryden, and the conditions. I think that gives us a better picture as members because we don't know how large this province is and people forget that it could probably take you I don't know how many hours of driving to get to Fort Frances or Rainy River. But it's a heck of a long way, and it's—

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It's about 20.

Mr. Mike Colle: Pardon me?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Twenty.

Mr. Mike Colle: Twenty hours? Yes, 20 hours. You could get to Florida, probably, quicker than going there. They just have no idea how big this province is. Especially, again, in winter, when people have to travel—they have to go to work—and the transport trucks have to deliver their goods, it is not a matter of choice: “Well, I'm not going to go today because the roads are icy.”

I certainly will pass on your very good suggestions about meeting with the contractors and seeing if we can get the minister to visit because, as you said, there seems to be one contractor that seems to be problematic and is not working up to standard, and perhaps the others are. But I think it would help to have the minister engaged in this, and if he can't come up, at least to get a senior MTO official there to ensure that the contractor is meeting their

obligations, which they're getting well paid for. I think what you're doing as an MPP is very important because, whether as ministry officials or the minister, it's hard to get an on-the-ground view of what's happening. I think your passing this on to the ministry officials here in Toronto will help to connect the reality of your part of Ontario to the people down here at MTO.

As you know, generally MTO has a very serious interest in road safety. Their tradition is to take this stuff seriously because they are the front-line people for the most part. A lot of them live in those parts of Ontario and have family and friends all throughout there, so for them it's not just a job. That's why I'm going to make sure I pass this on, especially—the fact is that last year there were not very good outcomes. The minister mentioned, I think, in committee, that there are 52 new, additional pieces of snow removal equipment going into the field, and to see if they're there and on the road would help. But on the other hand, if a contractor is not meeting their obligations, all the equipment in the world isn't going to help make the road safer.

As you said, I'll also pass on the fact is that we take preventative measures to ensure that you're out there preventing things from happening, rather than reacting after the fact, when it's too late. We shouldn't have conditions where we have 10- or 12-truck pileups happening.

Again, I think the member from Kenora–Rainy River, as she always does, raises this in an objective and sincere way, and I will do my best, as the parliamentary assistant, to pass on the importance of her question and her request to the minister. If I have to talk to MTO officials myself—they're all in committee now, which is good—in fact, I'll even do that, because they're going to be back at estimates tomorrow. I'll pass on your concerns again, as the member from Timmins–James Bay has already about some of the issues he had.

Again, thank you for bringing that forward this evening.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1830.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
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Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
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Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
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Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

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Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
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Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
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Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
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Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakubski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Niagara Falls	

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des comptes publics**

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Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
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**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial
sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience
intellectuelle**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Continued from back cover

Northern Ontario development

Mr. Bill Mauro	4436
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	4437

Air ambulance service

Mr. Frank Klees	4437
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4437

Winter highway maintenance

Ms. Sarah Campbell	4438
Hon. Glen R. Murray	4438

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	4439
----------------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Clarence Kieffer

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	4439
----------------------------	------

Korean War

Ms. Cindy Forster	4439
-------------------------	------

Disaster relief

Mr. Mike Colle	4439
----------------------	------

Diabetes

Mr. Victor Fedeli	4439
-------------------------	------

Home care

Ms. Soo Wong	4440
--------------------	------

War of 1812

Mr. Jim McDonell	4440
------------------------	------

Events in Nickel Belt / Événements divers à Nickel Belt

Mme France Gélinas	4440
--------------------------	------

Renewable energy

Mr. Bill Mauro	4441
----------------------	------

Collingwood General and Marine Hospital

Mr. Jim Wilson	4441
----------------------	------

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	4441
-------------------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Energy Consumer Protection Amendment Act

(Elimination of Fixed Rate Electricity Contracts), 2013, Bill 132, Ms. Campbell / Loi de 2013 modifiant la Loi sur la protection des consommateurs d'énergie (élimination des contrats de fourniture d'électricité à tarif fixe), projet de loi 132, Mme Campbell	
First reading agreed to	4442
Ms. Sarah Campbell	4442

Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Amendment Act, 2013, Bill 133, Mrs. Meilleur / Loi de 2013 modifiant la Loi sur la négociation collective relative à la Police provinciale de l'Ontario, projet de loi 133, Mme Meilleur	
First reading agreed to	4442

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Ontario Provincial Police / Police provinciale de l'Ontario

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	4442
-------------------------------	------

Anti-bullying initiatives

Hon. Liz Sandals	4442
------------------------	------

Workplace safety

Hon. Yasir Naqvi	4443
------------------------	------

Ontario Provincial Police

Mr. Steve Clark	4444
-----------------------	------

Anti-bullying initiatives

Mr. Rob Leone	4445
---------------------	------

Workplace safety

Mr. Monte McNaughton	4445
----------------------------	------

Anti-bullying initiatives

Mr. Peter Tabuns	4445
------------------------	------

Ontario Provincial Police

Ms. Peggy Sattler	4445
-------------------------	------

Workplace safety

Mr. Taras Natyshak	4446
--------------------------	------

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Darlington nuclear generating station

Mr. John O'Toole	4446
------------------------	------

Ontario Ranger Program

Mr. John Vanthof	4446
------------------------	------

Soins de longue durée

M. Grant Crack	4446
----------------------	------

Lyme disease

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette	4446
------------------------------	------

Minimum wage

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	4447
-------------------------	------

Legal aid

Mr. Bob Delaney	4447
-----------------------	------

Ontario Drug Benefit Program

Mr. Jeff Yurek	4447
----------------------	------

Employment practices

Mr. Paul Miller	4447
-----------------------	------

Distracted driving

Mr. Bas Balkissoon	4448
--------------------------	------

Long-term care	
Mr. Jim McDonell	4448
Minimum wage	
Mr. Jonah Schein	4448
Wind turbines	
Ms. Laurie Scott	4448
Lyme disease	
Mr. Rick Nicholls	4449
Taxation	
Ms. Sarah Campbell	4449

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2013, Bill 122, Mrs. Sandals / Loi de 2013 sur la négociation collective dans les conseils scolaires, projet de loi 122, Mme Sandals	
Mr. Paul Miller	4449
Hon. Liz Sandals	4451
Mr. Jeff Yurek	4451
Mr. John Vanthof	4452
Mr. Bas Balkissoon	4452
Mr. Paul Miller	4452
Mr. Rick Nicholls	4453
Mr. Grant Crack	4454
Ms. Sylvia Jones	4454
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	4454
Hon. Jeff Leal	4455
Mr. Rick Nicholls	4455
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	4455
Ms. Dipika Damerla	4457
Mr. Todd Smith	4457
Mr. Paul Miller	4457
Hon. Michael Coteau	4457

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	4458
Mr. Victor Fedeli	4458
Mr. John Vanthof	4459
Mr. Shafiq Qaadri	4460
Mr. Todd Smith	4460
Mr. Paul Miller	4460
Mr. Victor Fedeli	4460
Mr. John Vanthof	4461
Hon. Liz Sandals	4462
Mr. Todd Smith	4462
Mr. Paul Miller	4462
Mr. John Fraser	4463
Mr. John Vanthof	4463
Mr. Jeff Yurek	4463
Mr. Paul Miller	4465
Ms. Dipika Damerla	4465
Mr. Victor Fedeli	4465
Mr. John Vanthof	4466
Mr. Jeff Yurek	4466
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	4466

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE / DÉBAT SUR LA MOTION D'AJOURNEMENT

Pan Am Games

Mr. Jeff Yurek	4467
Hon. Michael Chan	4467

Manufacturing jobs

Mr. Rick Nicholls	4468
Mrs. Laura Albanese	4469

Winter highway maintenance

Ms. Sarah Campbell	4470
Mr. Mike Colle	4471

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 19 November 2013 / Mardi 19 novembre 2013

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families), 2013, Bill 21, Mr. Naqvi / Loi de 2013 modifiant la Loi sur les normes d'emploi (congés pour aider les familles), projet de loi 21, M. Naqvi	
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	4417
Mr. Vic Dhillon	4422
Mr. John O'Toole	4424
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	4425
Mr. John Fraser	4425
Mr. John Yakabuski	4425
Mr. Vic Dhillon	4426
Third reading debate deemed adjourned	4426

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Rob E. Milligan	4426
Mr. Rick Bartolucci	4426
Mr. Rick Nicholls	4426
Ms. Catherine Fife	4426
Hon. James J. Bradley	4426
Mr. Jeff Yurek	4426
Mme France Gélinas	4426
Hon. Michael Gravelle	4426
Mr. Garfield Dunlop	4426
Hon. John Gerretsen	4426
Hon. Jeff Leal	4426
Mr. Victor Fedeli	4427
Ms. Andrea Horwath	4427
Hon. Teresa Piruzza	4427
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	4427
Ms. Soo Wong	4427
Hon. Mario Sergio	4427
Hon. Glen R. Murray	4427
Hon. Liz Sandals	4427
Hon. Brad Duguid	4427
Mr. Mike Colle	4427
Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield	4427
L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur	4427
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	4427

Legislative pages

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	4427
-------------------------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Government accountability	
Mr. Tim Hudak	4428
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4428
Government accountability	
Mr. Tim Hudak	4429
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4429
Hon. Charles Sousa	4429
Job creation	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	4430
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4430
Horse racing industry	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	4431
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4431
Government accountability	
Ms. Laurie Scott	4431
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4432
Hon. Charles Sousa	4432
Air ambulance service	
Mme France Gélinas	4432
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4432
Adoption	
Mr. Vic Dhillon	4433
Hon. Teresa Piruzza	4433
Hospital funding	
Mr. Tim Hudak	4433
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4433
Accessibility for the disabled	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	4434
Hon. Eric Hoskins	4434
French-language education / Éducation en français	
Mr. Shafiq Qaadri	4434
Hon. Brad Duguid	4435
L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur	4435
Power plants	
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	4435
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4435
Hon. John Milloy	4436
Security at correctional facilities	
Ms. Peggy Sattler	4436
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	4436

Continued on inside back cover

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Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 20 November 2013

Mercredi 20 novembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 20 November 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 20 novembre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTRONIC PERSONAL HEALTH INFORMATION PROTECTION ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROTECTION DES RENSEIGNEMENTS PERSONNELS SUR LA SANTÉ FIGURANT DANS UN DOSSIER DE SANTÉ ÉLECTRONIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 10, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 78, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to electronic health records / Projet de loi 78, Loi modifiant certaines lois en ce qui concerne les dossiers de santé électroniques.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to try to make sense for everybody in this House of Bill 78, the Electronic Personal Health Information Protection Act. I say this because I've had the pleasure of reading the bill, of course, and it is one that is really hard on the brain. You read a paragraph and then you say, "What did I read? What does that mean?" Then I read it in French in the hope that maybe it will make more sense. It's the same thing: really hard to understand. But that does not mean it is not important, and this is what I want to talk to you about this morning.

What is this bill all about? Well, it is about our health record. We all have a health record. If you have a family physician or a nurse practitioner, they keep a health record. If you go to the hospital, they keep a record. If you go to the health unit, if you go to a community health centre, an aboriginal health access centre, a family health team—whenever you have an encounter with a health care professional—they will keep a record of that encounter, because this helps them to know you better and this helps them to shape the right care for you.

We have all seen this. We've gone to our family physician or nurse practitioner, and they open up this little file that has our name and OHIP number in there and where we live and the medication we take and if we've had any surgery and if we have any allergies. Then there are all the tests we've ever gone for, and they're usually organized, like all the blood tests and all the diagnostic imag-

ing. If you've had any consultation with a specialist, it will all be there.

For years and years this has been kept in a paper form and has helped health professionals all over Ontario, all over Canada, all over the world, do their work. Times are changing. Now, more and more of this is done in an electronic format. So more and more now, if you go, you will see that the person, your care provider, no matter what their designation—whether they be a physician, a nurse, a physiotherapist, an occupational therapist, a speech pathologist or an audiologist; you name it—there's a good chance they're now sitting in front of a computer screen. As they talk to you and as they provide the episode of care, they will keep notes in an electronic format.

There's nothing wrong with this. This is now 2013, and we all know that if we could share that information more easily, it would be better. But then there is a balance that needs to be reached; that is, a balance between having access to that information so that when you go and see new providers you don't have to repeat your OHIP number, your date of birth, your address, the medication you're on, your allergies, who your family physician or nurse practitioner, is and all of this; it would already all be there. If you've had a test done in the hospital, when you go back to your primary care providers, they have this test right in front of you. If you've been sent to a lab, they have this right in front of you. They know if they've talked to you about this or not. They have flags in there to tell you if you're due for your flu shot or any other immunization that has run its course.

Electronic health records are a good thing, something that will make the practice of the health care practitioner a whole lot better. But—and it always comes with a "but"—we have to be able to assure every single Ontarian that their privacy will be protected throughout. I can tell you that what used to happen was that the paper charts, as we call them, were always guarded under lock and key. It didn't matter where you went; nobody had access to those except for the people who needed to have access. If you wanted a record in any hospital, rehab centre or clinic, you got the record of the person who's coming to see you and nothing else. You're not allowed to go and start having some light reading of people's medical charts just for something to do—absolutely not. You're not allowed to do this, and this is something that is ingrained in each and every health professional the minute you start to see your first patient or client. A health record has to be protected. In a paper form, it is physically protected under lock and key, and when the

doors are open or the filing cabinets are unlocked, there is always a person there who guards those files. Nobody has access who is not supposed to have access.

I can tell you that in the health care system they take this responsibility to guard people's private information really, really seriously. Anybody who has ever had a job in the health care system will tell you that either during your interview process or when you first get your orientation in your new workplace, you will be told that if you are ever caught using a health chart—a personal health record—for any reason other than care, you will lose your job. Everybody knows this. You are not allowed to look, and it is taken very seriously.

I can tell you that I have been witness—the honourable member from Welland, who also comes from the health care system, has been witness to people who have, for reasons that seemed really good and caring—they wanted to see what was in their mother's chart, so they could help her; they wanted to see what was in their spouse's chart, so they could help explain, because they are health care professionals and they know how to read those things. It didn't matter the reason why you had a peek in there; you lost your job. If you were unionized, the union would go to bat for you, and you would still lose your job. You didn't get a second chance; you didn't get to explain. That's a no-no in health care. You use the chart for the benefit of the patient and for nothing else.

0910

I have been witness to people who have looked at a chart for a very good reason. I was there when the security guard from the hospital escorted her to her locker. She emptied her locker. She was escorted off the property for having looked at her mother's chart because her mother didn't understand her care. You don't do this. If they are not your clients, you don't do this, and everybody in health care knows that.

Why is it so important that this information be kept private? Because it has to do with the fundamentals of care. The relationship between a care provider and a patient is based on trust. The client sitting in front of you, if you're the care provider, has to trust you that no matter what he or she says to you, you will use it to help him, and nothing else. They have to feel secure that what they say to you, that is often not very glamorous on their part, that is often very, very personal, will not go beyond that conversation between those two human beings, one seeking care and another one hoping to help.

This fundamental relationship of trust is at the centre of our health care system. If you look at compliance—if you have, for one reason or another, damaged that relationship of trust—I can guarantee you that compliance with the treatment will go out the window, because health and health care do not happen on the surgical table and in the doctor's office or the nurse's office. Health is your own responsibility. You are the one who knows yourself the best. You are the one who knows how to keep yourself healthy, and you seek help from health professionals to help you do this. But at the end of the day, you are the one who has all of the answers. You are the

one who has most of the knowledge. That knowledge exchange has to be done in a relationship of trust. To guard those charts and the privacy of those charts with your life is very important, because if you don't, then this relationship of trust is gone, and the chances that the care will be effective are also gone out the window with it.

So here we are, in 2013, where electronic health records are becoming more and more in usage throughout the health care system, throughout Ontario, and all of the strong laws that we had in place to protect health records—they were called the Personal Health Information Protection Act—everything that existed to protect this paper chart does not apply that well to the electronic format, so the law had to be updated. It's now called EPHIPA, Electronic Personal Health Information Protection Act. This is what we are talking about today.

How do we do this transition, that everybody wants, toward an electronic health record while at the same time keeping the same level of trust that the information that will be shared, that will be captured electronically, will be protected?

It's pretty easy to see that if your chart is in a filing cabinet with a lock and key, and the filing cabinet is inside of this room that has a door and a key and no window, it's pretty intuitive that your chart is pretty well protected. Somebody has to have a key to the door, then has to have a key to the filing cabinet and then has to have access to the codes to be able to find yours. I'd feel pretty good that things were good, well protected. They have been well protected when they were in the paper chart form, with a few exceptions, but those exceptions were always punished severely.

Now, in an electronic format—we all know how easy it is to share information over the Internet. It is the click of a mouse. We've all heard of hackers who were able to go into a MasterCard data bank and broke into a Sears data bank. They have broken into some of the Pentagon's databases. What's to assure us that they're not going to break into my health record or your health record and then not only do damage to that relationship of trust but also do damage that is irreparable? Once some of this personal information goes into the public domain, it is impossible to unwind the clock. It is impossible to bring this information back. At the end of the day, we are all human beings.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's getting a little loud in here. I'm having trouble hearing the speaker. There are several conversations going on. You know the game: If you want to talk, go outside and talk, or keep it down.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The service I was talking about, electronic health records—the paper charts have served us well, and now we were into the electronic and the same level of trust.

If there is a breach, and if our personal information ends up in the public domain, the damage that can be done is tremendous. We share some of our most intimate and personal information with our health care providers,

and we live in the society that we live in, with all of its taboos and all of its prejudices and all of its discrimination. Information that has to do with our sexuality, that has to do with our reproductive function, is very personal. We keep that personal for very good reason, but it is captured in your health record, and that information, if it was to be broken into, could all of a sudden find itself on the front page of the paper.

How would you like your personal information to find itself in the public media or on social media? All of a sudden pictures of you before and after your breast reduction go around wild on to the Internet. Information about who has had a vasectomy and who hasn't, who has had a pregnancy interruption, who has had a sex re-assignment: All of this is very personal information that is contained within our health record. If that information became public, it could do a lot of damage to a lot of people, and it needs to be protected. I could give you a list of very damaging information that you can only find in a health record.

A health record is there to help you. It needs to be protected. It needs to go into an electronic format but in a way that would assure us that this protection would continue to happen. In May of this year, the government introduced Bill 78 to try to do that, and here we are on October 20, and this is the second time we talked about it. I'll make a little parenthesis here to say that I'm a little bit disappointed at the speed at which this thing is moving forward.

We all know, and the minister is pleased to tell us and repeat to us, how many millions of Ontarians now have their health records in an electronic format. But with electronic formats comes the risk of sharing information outside of the circle of care, outside of the interdisciplinary team that is there to help you. That's something that we can't afford. That's something that should never happen. That's something that would have a horrendously damaging effect on people's lives, on communities, on the health care system as a whole.

Is it important that we pass this bill? Absolutely. Maybe I should have said right off the bat that the New Democrats will support moving this bill forward, and then I will use the rest of my time to talk a little bit to you as to: How do we make this bill even better?

0920

Bill 78, which we're talking about today, is the Electronic Personal Health Information Protection Act, and as I said, it was introduced in May of this year. It began second reading in October; that is, it was brought back for us to talk about it on October 10 of this year, and this is only the second time that it has been brought back for us to discuss the bill so that we could move it forward.

As I mentioned, it is a very technical and complicated bill, and I would say that for most Ontarians it's not going to be the top-of-mind priority—and I don't blame you. But then there are people like myself and my 106 colleagues, for whom it has to be a priority because the protection of personal health information is something

that every Ontarian would be concerned about if there were a breach, and if that breach were to affect them.

I will remind you, Speaker, that last spring we heard that our Outdoors Cards had been outsourced to an American firm. I can tell you the number of people who were upset about this, because that was their personal information that was now held in a database someplace in the States—in Wisconsin, if I remember well—and people were really opposed to this. They had shared that information with their government in order to get an Outdoors Card. The Outdoors Card, to me, is not really that private information; it tells if you have a conservation or full fishing licence—you're allowed to catch two pickerels or six—and it tells if you have a small-game or a large-game hunting licence. It is still information that people had shared with their government and they didn't want everybody to know. And now this database was being managed by a US firm based out of Wisconsin, and people were really worried. They phoned me and they phoned, I'm sure, most of you. And that was not personal health information; it was whether you had a fishing licence or what kind of hunting licence you had.

But when those steps are done, you really see the core values of Ontarians. This is private information. They will share it with the government in order to get their Outdoors Cards, but they don't want that information shared with anybody else. This is their own private lives, and nobody else should have access to it unless they decide to share that information themselves.

This bill is about the protection of people's personal health information. It's something that, to me and to a lot of people, is very important. Unfortunately, it's very technical—and hard on the coconut, let me tell you—but I will try to make it a little bit easier for you.

The bill has wide support from our stakeholders, including a very important one, and that is our privacy commissioner. The privacy commissioner has spent a lot of time looking at this piece of legislation to make sure it does just that: to make sure it strikes the right balance between making your personal health information available online to people who need to see it, and at the same time guaranteeing your privacy. The bill takes a good step toward this, and I will make suggestions today to make it go a few steps further.

Some have started to look at the bill. I commend the Ontario Hospital Association for a very good analysis of the bill that I think has been shared with all of us; I will make reference to it later on in my speech. We will continue to work with everybody who is interested to try to make the bill stronger.

What is in Bill 78? Well, in Bill 78 are the core building blocks of how we protect our health information record once it is stored in an electronic format. It has many different building blocks to it. The bill will allow for the sharing of electronic health records between health providers in what is described as the patient's circle of care. Most of the time you will think about your primary care provider, either your family physician or your nurse practitioner, and maybe they work with a nurse, and they may

have a nutritionist or a social worker working with them. How do those people get to read each other's notes in a way that helps deliver better care to you while always safeguarding your own privacy for your own information?

In the bill, there's a set of provisions to do just that. The bill outlines some privacy and security requirements for everybody involved in the creation, maintenance and sharing of the EHR, the electronic health record, and the bill introduces a new term called "prescribed organization." Right now in Ontario, most of us think this organization is going to be what is known right now as eHealth, but I will talk a little bit more about that. The prescribed organization would have to comply with detailed privacy and security obligations, and that would include consent directives; that is, you will have the final say as to who gets access to what. They will be in charge of managing all of that.

EPHIPA, the bill we're talking about, will prohibit a health care professional, also called a health information custodian, from collecting personal information except for the purpose of giving care to you. If you don't need that information to provide care, then that information will not be collected; it will only be collected in order to help you.

It will also establish the rights of individuals as to how they can access their record, how they can make corrections to their records, and how they can make directives as to who has access to what and who doesn't. It also has provision as to when those directives can be overridden. That is, you may have said you don't want anybody to have access to the list of medications you are taking; for one reason or another, this is information that you prefer not to share. Well, in the case of an emergency, there could be some valid reason to override, and those are outlined in the bill.

The bill also sets out who will have access to that information, in which format, with how much identifier, and the process for reviewing all of this.

The bill also talks about the penalty. We hope there will never be a breach, but if there ever was to be one, then we're talking about severe fines. We're talking about \$100,000 for an individual—so if an individual went and looked into a patient's file that they were not supposed to, they could be fined up to \$100,000—and half a million for an organization, so a family health team, a community health centre or a hospital could be fined up to \$500,000 if they do this.

So this is what the bill sets out to do. How well does it do this? Well, the first challenge we have has to do with software. The Electronic Personal Health Information Protection Act, the bill we are talking about, includes detailed consent management requirements; that is, if you want a certain part of your health records to not be shared, you are allowed to do this. It happens right now all the time, and it will continue to happen. This is your personal information. You get to decide who gets to see it and who gets to not see it.

Most people are very comfortable, within their interdisciplinary team, within their circle of care, that the

people providing them care have access. But if, for one reason or another, you don't want that, you are allowed to make directives and say, "I don't want this part of my chart or that part of my chart to be available" to anybody, or to a specific set of providers within your circle of care.

0930

Many people, and that includes me, are worried that for this provision to work, we need software that allows us to do this, and this software right now does not exist. Right now, what you have is that for people who are still on paper charts, when a client or a patient tells you they will share with you some information, but only with you—they don't want the rest of the team to know—you take your notes and you do your health records like you always did, and then you put it in a sealed envelope. Then you sign across the sealed envelope and you write your name, so that people know those were your notes and those contain information that the patient has told you they don't want to share with anybody.

Sometimes it's the entire chart. If we know that there is a chart that is at risk of being looked at—I can just imagine, when Prince William and Kate went into the hospital to deliver their child, that there were probably a few people putting pressure on to find out details. What do you do when you're in a circumstance like this, where we deal with human beings? You take the entire chart, you put it in a sealed envelope and you keep it under lock and key. There are physical ways of doing this, because we all know the importance of keeping that information confidential.

But how do you do this once that information is collected in an electronic format? I wish I could tell you that there is this really good software out there that exists, that allows us to put firewalls around—I know nothing about that stuff, but it sounds good—but that does not exist.

We have a bill that does the right thing, that puts in place the right building blocks to assure people that if you don't want that information shared, it will not be; it will be protected. The bill is good, but it depends on technology that does not exist. I guess I have a bit of trouble with this, and I'm guessing a lot of people would have a bit of trouble with that too.

When the Auditor General came out with the billion-dollar scandal regarding eHealth, we all realized, and the government kept on telling us, that the complexity of the software and the interaction between existing and new systems were providing significant challenges, and that we don't yet have a comprehensive electronic health record in Ontario because, technologically, it is really hard to do.

Although we have bits and pieces of an electronic health record—you go to your primary care providers, and there's a good chance now that they sit in front of a computer screen and get your information all down there. When you go to the lab, the lab is actually able to send that information and it gets into the right patient chart. The next time you come up, they discuss the results with you. If it's an abnormal result, a flash goes on, and you know to give an appointment to that person to come back

to see you, that you need to talk to them. So with the labs, it works pretty good.

But then some of the lab tests are done at the health unit, and none of that comes back to your primary care provider. What happens is, the health unit mails you or faxes you the result of your test and a poor schmuck someplace in the primary care provider takes that fax and scans it and puts it into your health records—but it is put in your health record as a picture, so you cannot do trends with it, you cannot tag flags with it; you just have a picture of it that you have to look through. So some parts of our health care system work pretty good. The connectivity between the different parts is still an issue, and some parts of our health care system are still in the dark ages and have not embraced electronic health records at all. Is the software and the talking of different softwares together a challenge? Yes, it is. If there had been an easy solution, we would have found it a long time ago. Right now, they are adding building blocks the best they can, but it is still a challenge.

So here we have a bill telling us that, “We understand that some information has to be protected, and we understand that you have a right to withdraw information and keep it to a single health care provider, but I cannot tell you how this will be done.” Right now, hospitals are telling us that when this happens within the hospital, what they do is they put a flag on the chart. They keep a paper chart, and they keep it the old-fashioned way that they’ve always done it: They keep it in a sealed envelope, signed, in a drawer or a filing cabinet or a chart room under lock and key. So when you go on the electronic chart, you know that the person has a private chart someplace, and that’s all you know. But we’re not able to provide this in an electronic format yet.

The hospitals have chosen that method to continue to assure this relationship of trust with their clients, because they understand the damage that would be done to their reputation and the health care system as a whole if that trust was to be broken, but it also tells us that if we still have to keep part of it in a paper format hidden under lock and key someplace, then the software is not quite up to snuff. In health care jargon, we call this a locked box. That is, when we have a consent directive, you put it in the box with a lock and you make sure that this information is not shared. That, over the years, has helped maintain the trust with patients and clients who are often very, very fearful of the health care system.

Not everybody has had all good interactions with our health care system. For some people, it did not go well. For some people, it was quite traumatic. For some people, they actually were abused by our health care system—and you see this going through the courts. I have one in my riding right now where somebody in a position of trust with a health care designation abused a patient. You can understand that some of them are quite reluctant in their interactions with the health care system, and they want to protect their information because they’ve already been burned; they’ve already lost that trust. It is important for us to rebuild it so that they can have access to the

best health care system possible so that we can help them. So here we have this part of the bill that is well-intentioned but needs some work.

Then we have what I talked about, new jargon that is in this bill that is called “prescribed organization.” You will hear me use that term lots and lots, because it’s a term that is in the bill, but basically what it is is that the prescribed organizations think of it a bit as: Who will hold the database of all of that information? Who will manage that database so that the right information is available to the right people, and that people who should only have access to your name and address and phone number to give you an appointment, for instance, don’t have access to your whole record, and people who should have access to a part of your—etc. You get the idea.

0940

I and, I’d say, most people in Ontario are assuming that eHealth Ontario is going to be the prescribed organization, but the bill does not say that specifically; it just creates this terminology of “prescribed organization.” But bills often do this, so no panic yet. But I will quote from a researcher who wrote an article in the Osgoode Hall intellectual property law and technology program. Her name is Denise Brunson. She said the following, and I’m quoting from her report:

“It’s conceptually difficult to agree on what powers prescribed organizations will (and will not) have without a conceptual understanding of which will fall under this term. EHealth Ontario is one group that will clearly receive ‘prescribed organization’ status, but who else?”

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Transportation.

M^{me} France Gélinas: “In my opinion, the clear question that arises is to what extent private companies will be considered ‘prescribed organizations.’”

She goes on to say, “If there is no intent to allow private companies the designation, then why not draft the legislation more accurately and explicitly? The ambiguity of the term ‘prescribed organization’ makes me uncomfortable.” It makes me uncomfortable too.

Remember all the calls I was getting when the government subcontracted the health card to a Wisconsin, US, private firm? People were really uncomfortable with that. Why not put it right in the law from the start that prescribed organizations will have to be Ontario-based, not-for-profit agencies, preferably a government agency? Why not give people the reassurance they want from the start?

If you don’t do this, then people always assume the worst. People assume that management of this database—which, I’m sure, will cost millions of dollars, because everything is always expensive when it has to do with eHealth—will be put out to the lowest bidder and some company, wherever in the world, that underbids eHealth Ontario will suddenly be the prescribed organization that has access to all of the health records of every single Ontarian.

I feel very uncomfortable with that. I feel very, very uncomfortable with that. I feel uncomfortable having a

central database with people in it, and I'll talk about those later, but at least if we said right in the bill that it would have to be a government, not-for-profit agency based out of the government of Ontario, then—remember this relationship of trust that I talked about at the beginning, that people are willing to share with their government some information in order to get access to the services that the government paid for? There is this relationship there, but they're not willing to share that same information—remember that Outdoors Card? You're only sharing your name, address and whether you fish or hunt, and people were really upset that that database is no longer in Ontario.

Imagine if it is the database of every single Ontarian's health record that ends up at the same place in Wisconsin, if there seems to be such a good firm that handles our health cards better than anybody in Ontario. I think people would be very uncomfortable with this. I can tell you that I would be very uncomfortable with that.

I would like those assurances to be in the bill. If you have no intention of privatizing this, if you have no intention of exporting this outside of Ontario, then put it in the bill. Give people the reassurance from the start, so that you are part of building this relationship of trust that makes our health care system what it is, and I would feel a whole lot better.

Remember I talked about the consent directive, another building block? The goal of building a province-wide standard of consent directives, or the ability to opt out of all or any part of the electronic health record, is very important. It is something that has been part of the health care system for a long time. It is something that, if it's not there, will be a major barrier to access for people. It has to be there, because we live in a stigmatized society, because we live in the society we live in, with all of the taboos. Some information can only be shared in a trusting relationship with very few people. Our health care system needs that to continue.

Right now, most of the time those directives are shared with the provider in front of you. So they come to their provider and they say, "I will explain to you what happened so you can help me, but I don't want anybody else to know." Unfortunately, the way the bill is written, those directives will have to be managed by the prescribed organization—remember, what I think will be eHealth. So eHealth—I don't know—is a bureaucrat over the phone who I've never met before. This is not who I want to talk to be reassured that my private health information is not going to be shared. This has to change.

It has to be the health care providers who become in charge of this, because this is where those decisions are made. Those decisions are not made on Sunday morning while you're at mass or anything else. They are made in a provider's office while the relationship of care is going on. The provider is pushing you to share information that will help him or her help you, and you consent to share that information—sometimes reluctantly—because you know that they're there to help you, but you don't want anybody else to know. They are the ones who have to be

able to assure you that this information won't be shared, but the way the bill is written right now, they're not the ones in charge. EHealth is the one in charge of that. This needs to be fixed, because this opportunity to withdraw consent, this opportunity to limit access, is not something you want to do over a 1-800 number with somebody at eHealth who you don't know at all. You can expect changes in that.

I will quote from Denise Brunsdon again—actually, it comes from the Ontario Hospital Association, which "has also raised a valid point that the current wording of the legislation seems to imply that the opt-outs can only be made to the prescribed organizations"—that is, to eHealth. "They rightly point out that health information custodians"—which is the name that we give to people like hospitals, community health centres, aboriginal health access centres and family health teams; we call them custodians—"such as doctors or long-term-care facility staff, should also be allowed to take consent directives for patients wanting to opt out. This certainly seems to make sense from a patient care perspective" because "there is ease and intuitiveness associated with making your privacy requests directly to" the practitioner whom you want to hold accountable for this. We will be making suggestions to the bill to make that a reality.

Although the bill is very technical, it should still be focused on patients' needs, and it should still be focused on good patient care, and here is a way to bring back the patient's wishes into this: make it at the point of contact.

All right, here's the part that nobody likes to hear about but that still needs to be addressed—the bill does address it somehow—and that has to do with breaches. I hope that we never have to enact this part of the bill, but if we do, I want it to be as strong as possible. What if the system is violated and information is shared? I had given you examples earlier on where, when we hold medical records in paper format, it has happened that a breach has happened, but it was very limited. It was like one chart, one person, because you had to physically get possession of the chart and read it. It is very different from transferring what could be tens of thousands of charts with the click of a mouse, isn't it? What if there is a breach? The bill is sort of silent on what will happen then. What kind of crisis management must absolutely happen? Do you have to call the Ministry of Health? Do you have to call the police? How timely do you have to report this? Do you do your own investigation and make sure that you make yourself look good before you go out and tell people that this has happened? Who do you have to report it to? In what kind of a time frame do you have to do this? How fast do you have to tell people that their own personal health information was compromised? The bill is silent on that.

0950

We do talk about the fines, and they are serious—\$100,000 for an individual is a lot of money. I don't know too many people who would be able to pay that kind of money, so it's a good disincentive for people not to do this—same thing with \$500,000 for an agency. But

then, whenever you have such a huge penalty—people are human beings—it acts in two ways. It certainly acts as a deterrent, so people know not to do this, that if you do this you're going to be fined up to \$100,000. But it also acts as a deterrent in bringing forward the fact that a breach has happened, because if you bring forward the fact that the nurse or the physiotherapist beside you has done a breach, you now know that your good friend is on the hook for up to \$100,000. How do we balance that? The bill is not clear.

The bill is completely absent on what happens once the breach has happened. Not only do I want the people whose job it was to protect that information to be held accountable for not having duly protected the health information, but I also want a second and third degree of guilt, as in, if I'm the one who happens to get that information, whether maliciously or by accident—we've heard about USB keys that were forgotten, dropped, stolen, disappeared etc. I may very well be the one who finds that key. I want it to be an offence for anybody to use that information, to share that information, and certainly for anybody else who has, by no fault of their own or by malicious ways, found themselves with that information.

So we have to put extra wording in there to make sure that if—I hope it never happens—a breach of electronic health information records ever does happen, that whoever happens to be the recipient of this is held accountable, and if anybody shares that information, they're also held accountable and punished. I call this three degrees of protection. Hold the people who have that information, who are responsible for keeping it private, to account to the full extent to make sure they take this responsibility seriously and they protect it, but then, if there is a breach, make it clear as to how patients will be contacted, the ministry will be contacted, the time frame, and if that information finds itself in my hands or yours, or the hands of somebody with malicious intent, hold those people also accountable and punishable, and if they share that information in a public way, either through social media or any other media, hold those media also accountable for sharing information that was not theirs to share in the first place.

As I said in my opening statement, once a breach has happened, it can be devastating to the people whose health information finds itself on the front page of the paper. You will never be able to undo the damage that will have been done. It will be too late. By every means and extent of the law and the powers that are given to us as legislators, we have to make sure that we protect that—protect it at the source, protect it if there is a breach and protect it if there is ever an intention of sharing that information. I think that would bring a level of safety and comfort to people who are sometimes reluctant to have their information shared.

The bill also talks about an advisory committee. The advisory committee, I think, is something important, but it will only be important if the people who are sitting on that committee see their work as meaningful and important. I will be interested in seeing who will be there, and I

would certainly like people such as our privacy commissioner to be part of this.

Another part that is not included in the bill, and this is a part that a lot of Ontarians talk about, is that a lot of Ontarians would like to have access to their own records. That is, they would—

Interruption.

M^{me} France Gélinas: That's my colleague here, who's walking across the aisle.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Rosie, your phone is ringing.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It can't be me.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Sorry about this.

So, what a lot of people would like is to have access to their own health information. Why is it that I can go anywhere in the world and have access to my banking information—I can be basically anywhere in the world and put my banking card into a bank machine, in the middle of Africa or Cambodia, and it works. It knows how much money I have, or don't have, and it knows what I'm able to bring out. People want this.

I just turned the honourable member's BlackBerry off; lots of people carry those little BlackBerrys. We carry all sorts of information on this. I have access to my bank and my husband's bank on it. I have access to my kids' information. I have all of that on my BlackBerry, and yet I don't have access to something as simple as the list of medications that I'm on, so that when I'm at the pharmacy I can check.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The government wants your bank account information.

M^{me} France Gélinas: My colleague from Nepean says that it's because the government wants your bank information, but—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You don't have any money in it.

M^{me} France Gélinas: —but that doesn't mean there's money in it. Yes, I agree.

Back to the subject of health records, I would like the bill to start to open a safe way for people to do this: for people to manage their own care, for people to have access to that information, because at the end of the day, we are the ones who have the biggest impact on our health. If we empower ourselves with information, it's all for the better. The more you are interested in your health, the more you pay attention to it, the more you know about your health, the healthier you will be.

Given that this information will now be accessible in an electronic format, why not make it accessible to the patients themselves? They're talking about me. I want to know what they say about me, and I would like to have access. I say "me," but I know that there are a lot of people who are in the same frame of mind as I am.

There is still lots that I wanted to say. It's funny; I thought an hour would be a very long time, but there are only three minutes left. Just to recap, we will be supporting the bill. We think that it needs to go to committee, and in the period of time where it goes to committee, I have great hopes that we can make it even stronger.

An electronic health record is something that we all need and that we all want. Let's put the laws in place that will reassure Ontarians that their health record, whether it be kept in an electronic format or on a chart, will be protected, and only available and accessible to the people who are part of their circle of care.

1000

Ça me fait plaisir aujourd'hui de vous parler un petit peu des changements qui s'en viennent dans le système de santé envers les dossiers électroniques. En ce moment, de plus en plus de soins primaires et d'autres parties du système de la santé utilisent un dossier électronique. Avant, les dossiers de santé étaient toujours gardés dans des petites filières. Les filières papiers étaient gardées souvent dans une filière barrée ou dans une chambre fermée à clé pour s'assurer qu'on les protégeait. Cette protection-là doit être en place également lorsque les dossiers sont conservés de façon électronique.

Le projet de loi dont je discute aujourd'hui, c'est un projet de loi pour faire ça. C'est un projet de loi pour nous assurer que votre information sur votre santé, qu'elle soit gardée dans un dossier papier ou qu'elle soit gardée de façon électronique—ça ne fera aucune différence. On va être capable de vous assurer qu'elle sera en sécurité et que seulement les personnes qui peuvent avoir accès au dossier pour vous prodiguer des soins y auront accès.

Si on pense peut-être à une secrétaire médicale qui doit donner des rendez-vous, bien, elle pourra ouvrir votre dossier médical, mais seulement voir votre information—nom, numéro de téléphone, numéro d'OHIP, etc.—pour pouvoir vous donner un rendez-vous. Par contre, une infirmière qui doit faire une revue de santé ou un médecin qui doit faire une revue de santé aura accès au dossier complet. Donc le projet de loi est vraiment là pour protéger votre information personnelle pour s'assurer que vous pouvez continuer d'avoir confiance dans le système de la santé et que votre information ne sera utilisée qu'à bonne fin.

Il y a certaines lacunes dans le projet de loi, dont une sérieuse : c'est qu'on n'est pas certain que les produits informatiques que l'on a en ce moment nous permettent de faire tout ce qu'on a besoin de faire pour se protéger. On a également certains problèmes par rapport à pour-quoi est-ce que nous, comme individus, on ne pourrait pas avoir accès à notre dossier?

Donc, un bon projet de loi qu'on appuie. On va essayer de le rendre meilleur.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Merci.

We have two standing up here. The Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. I'm very pleased to respond to the member from Nickel Belt. This has been a very thoughtful response to this bill. I commend the member for clearly taking the time to thoroughly understand the bill. She has brought forward some advice, and I look forward to getting this bill to committee so that we can actually deal with the issues that she has raised.

I think it's important that we really put this bill in context. We have come so far when it comes to electronic health in the last decade. We've gone from almost no electronic medical records to 70% of us now having an electronic medical record, and that number is growing every day. To put this in context: Through telemedicine, 800 consultations every day are being performed on average across this province; 800 people are getting access to health care remotely so they don't have to travel and they can get access to that professional care much more easily. When it comes to hospital records being transferred from hospital to those EMRs in our nurse practitioner or family doctor offices, 8,000 times a day that information is being transferred.

We do need to update our legislation. This legislation is a very important step to protect patients when it comes to their privacy and to enable the system to work together as a system so information is shared among providers because that, increasingly, is the way we're delivering health care in this province and that's the way we should be delivering care, because we do need care from different providers. They all need to have the same information.

I do thank the member from Nickel Belt for a very thoughtful leadoff, and I look forward to working with her as we get this legislation through.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: We do support the intent of this bill. Having electronic records, of course, is what should be done. Having an organization to create them, we understand, is a necessary step to get there.

We're kind of shocked and surprised that an organization that was started some years ago to create eHealth records did not create this organization back then at the beginning. Some \$2 billion has been spent already on creating an eHealth record, and yet only now are we coming around to a point where we realize, or the government realizes, they should have an organization created to go about doing this.

Of course, the government has a bit of a track record of spending a lot of money and not getting much in the way of results. We see that with gas plants. We see that with Ornge scandals. We see that with Presto scandals. And eHealth has been going on for some years: We've spent \$2 billion, and we have very little to show for it.

We are also very concerned that we have electronic records being taken by an organization that doesn't yet exist and which will have the powers to appoint or hire third party contractors to assist in this process and that they would be removed from the minister's immediate oversight and accountability. This very important information would now be disseminated to a new organization that then contracted out to a third party, and that's worrisome. That is troublesome. These are personal records, and we want better oversight and accountability of these personal records.

We will support the intent of the bill. There are major reservations, especially on oversight and accountability

and good record-keeping. In committee, there have to be major changes in accountability and oversight made to this bill, as this government has proven that lack of oversight and accountability has allowed all those other expenses to happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to commend the member for Nickel Belt for her very thoughtful opening speech about this legislation. I think she clearly brings some first-hand knowledge, as someone who was involved in providing health care services to people in her constituency, which I think is really, really important to all of us as we look at this legislation and consider the impact on the people that we represent.

Coming from a research background, I certainly know the importance of ethical research, of trust, of consent and of protection of privacy. In some of the research projects that I've been involved in, when we have to work with research ethics boards to ensure ethical standards of practice and procedures around doing research, we understand that the protection of the participant's privacy is paramount, that participants have to be able to consent to whether or not their information is going to be used and that we have to have very, very clear guidelines in place to ensure that participants are able to protect their privacy. Nowhere is this more important than in the field of health care.

The member for Nickel Belt talked about some of the areas where the release of personal health information, given the sensitivity of that information—how damaging it could be if we don't have the appropriate safeguards in place. Certainly, we need to make sure that there is clarity around how we're going to get those safeguards and that there are protections to ensure that those private sector companies that shouldn't get access aren't able to access that data.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm very happy to get up to speak about this proposed legislation that, if passed, would protect the privacy of patients' electronic health information and improve the quality of patient care.

I think it's important to note that we already have 70% of Ontarians with some form of an eHealth record. That's fantastic. When I talk to my constituents in Pickering-Scarborough East, Speaker, there is tremendous consensus that we need to keep going in terms of improving the electronic health system to ensure that it's affordable, efficient and, of course, secure. It's very important because we know how much health care costs in Ontario, and having effective eHealth is critical to managing those costs so that the dollars can go directly into patient care.

This is very fresh in my mind, Speaker. My husband came home from the hospital last week after suffering from a life-threatening infection, and I was reminded yet again how well the system is already working. We had to coordinate his care at home between two CCACs. The electronic information was there; it was transparent; it

was seamless. Of course, those transitions are always a little bumpy, but the electronic health information was indeed very seamless as it transferred from the doctor to the CCAC providers and the Toronto hospital that he was in, and then transferring to the CCAC in Pickering, Durham region, where we live. I'm always reminded about how we are not as reliant on paper as we used to be, that the system is moving forward to a very effective system.

I've experienced this too, as a patient in the health care system, where I've had direct access to test results, surgical procedures, pathology reports, blood tests. It's fantastic. I think patients should own that information and should be more aware, and this bill will bring forward more security and protection in this area.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nickel Belt has two minutes.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank the Minister of Health, the Minister of Consumer Services, the MPP from Carleton-Mississippi Mills and my colleague from London West for their comments. I think there's quite a bit of support in this House for bringing this piece of legislation forward. Are we exactly where we need to land? I would say we all agree that we can do a bit better, but if we all put our shoulders to the wheel, I think we can do something good.

The Minister of Consumer Services talked about a private experience where we see that health records are used, and we sort of assume right now that our privacy is protected, and I can assure you that the people who use them do their best. The bill will give a clear, easily understood framework for everybody as to what the steps are that make sure that this information is protected, because it doesn't matter how good the providers are and how good the facilities are if we cannot trust that they are good. This is the role that we play as legislators in this Legislative Assembly: to give people trust that we have the right framework in place, to assure them that the government has looked at this with the view of ensuring that your private information will be protected. That goes a long way to maintaining an excellent health care system in Ontario, one that everybody can trust and one that everybody can rely on in their times of need, without a second thought as to, "Is my personal story going to end up on the front page of the paper?"

Let's move on with this bill. I think we need it now.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to welcome Mr. Bill Laidlaw, who I'm meeting with today, along with other members, I'm sure, of the Canadian Assistive Devices Association.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I would like to welcome a group of constituents from the great riding of Oxford to

the Legislature today to see the presentation of a petition. They include Kathy Finch, Glen Finch, Joan Craven, Trevor Craven and Nigel Finch. I particularly want to recognize Nigel for his work gathering the signatures for this petition, and I welcome them all to Queen's Park.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I would like to introduce Mr. Gezahn Wordofa, from my riding of Perth—Wellington. He's a former UN Goodwill Ambassador, and is now a founder of the Huron-Perth Multicultural Association.

Mr. Steve Clark: It was a great surprise today to see an old friend from my high school days in Brockville. I'd like to introduce, in the upper gallery—

Interjection: You had hair then.

Mr. Steve Clark: I did have hair then. He knows I had an Afro once. I'd like to introduce Rick Shewan, who is here with the Canadian Assistive Devices Association.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I just have a hard time picturing you with an Afro.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'd like to welcome the students and the teachers from Dr. Norman Bethune. The teachers are Shannon Lee and Alison Rimell. Their grade 10 students are from Dr. Norman Bethune, and I want to thank them for writing to me.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games, and I'll maybe give him a moment to get to his seat. Minister, since 2011, we've been asking what the Pan Am Games will cost the province. For two years now, we've insisted the budget of \$1.4 billion wasn't the real budget. You've insisted it was.

Other Pan Am projects, like the athletes' village at \$709 million, the Pan Am trails at \$3.5 million, the ARL at \$456 million, transportation at up to \$90 million and the Pan Am secretariat at another \$10 million were not included in your \$1.4-billion pretend budget. After two years of demanding the truth, holding your feet to the fire, your back against the wall, today we received an estimate that is almost more than double the cost of the \$1.4 billion, at over \$2.5 billion.

Minister, you still refuse to release the exact number for the games. Why do you think it's acceptable to play games with the Ontario taxpayers' money?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Hon. Michael Chan: This morning, we had a technical briefing. The opposition was invited, but he chose not to get there. He will keep his unfounded allegations and keep himself—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The tradition of this place is not to mention anyone's attendance in this place, and I would ask the member not to do it again.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will wait for calm.

Finish, please.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you, Speaker.

We have been up front, open and transparent on the Pan/Parapan American Games. For example, one of the largest items in our additional investment is the athletes' village, at \$700 million. That makes up 70% of the \$1 billion. The athletes' village has always been the responsibility of the host jurisdiction and outside the \$1.4-billion operating budget.

From the very beginning in the bid book to reports in both the Toronto Star and Toronto Sun in 2009—thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Minister, I would have been proud and pleased to come to your technical briefing had I been invited.

Minister, this has been kind of tiring and really, frankly, kind of sad. From the start, you've done everything you can to stymie us on finding out the true costs of the Pan Am Games—at every stop. The list is long, Minister: from hidden budgets to FOI requests costing more than \$3,000 to refusing to answer questions in question period—we just witnessed that—to blocking investigations into the games in committee to sacrificing worthy bills like Bill 105, you're determined to hide the true cost of the Pan Am Games to the public. You've even resorted to having us sift through 45 boxes of 50,000 documents since you won't just open up to the people of Ontario.

Today, because we have your back against the wall and because you know we have the information buried in those documents, we found out that your budget is over \$2.56 billion—way more than the \$1.4 billion you've been touting for the past three years.

Minister, are these the actions to be indicative of what Ontario can expect from the supposedly new open and transparent, responsible government? If so, it's very sad.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, through you to the member opposite. He was invited: he failed to show up.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

While that is not exactly talking about somebody's attendance, it's tiptoeing around that fact. I'd ask the member to be very cautious of making any references whatsoever. Thank you very much.

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, I was invited two times to debate at a late show. The opposition failed to show up. I showed up.

Allow me to continue on about the athletes' village. It is the cornerstone of the broader revitalization of the West Don Lands into a vibrant new mixed-use com-

munity that will boast over 250 units for low-income rental, over 100 units for affordable housing sales, the first-ever George Brown residence that will house 500 students, and a brand new YMCA. The revitalization has been planned since the 1980s—almost 30 years.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

I'm going to offer some clarity here. I think it's important because the debate needs to take place. Any reference to attendance in this House or a requirement is conventionally not mentioned. We all know why that convention is important to stick to. There's a tightrope walk between briefings that are not part of the House and late shows or attendance in the House. I will listen very carefully to ensure I make the distinction between the two.

As for the comments that I'm hearing, I'm also hearing some heckling on both sides that is borderline unacceptable and unparliamentary, so I'm going to ask everyone to just bring it down, get to the crux of the issue—question and answer. We'll leave it at that.

Folal supplementary.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Minister, we don't trust you. I don't think the people of Ontario trust you either. Your government has been talking a lot about transparency and accountability. The Premier even went so far as to stand up and promise Ontarians that this government is committed to this—or at least, simply having a conversation about it. Yet to date, openness and transparency have been non-existent when it comes to the Pan Am Games, and the commitment you've shown to doing the exact opposite is astounding.

We've asked simple questions and in return we've received convoluted answers from a confused minister. Today, the estimates confirm that the games will likely cost more than double the \$1.4-billion budget that you've been talking about.

Minister, you've lost control of the games and the trust of the province. Maybe you should just simply show up for work or resign today, and let someone else do it who can handle the job.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Minister.

1040

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, I don't trust his words. The member and the party opposite have never had anything positive to say about the Pan Am Games. In fact, they continue to shine a negative light on our local Pan American communities, our competing athletes and para-athletes, over 20,000 volunteers, over 26 new capital and infrastructure projects, and the 250,000 tourists who will be visiting. Their party also continues to cut ties and embarrass our province with 41 nations, boycotting our reception last month and spreading unfounded allegations and numbers to the public.

We are planning for the best-ever games, the most open and transparent games ever.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is to the Premier. The Premier came to Wellington county on October 11 for her announcement on horse racing. She was asked about the Liberal-NDP decision to pull the plug on SARP, which they did with no warning to the industry they were about to devastate. On CBC French radio, the Premier admitted that the decision "was not a good decision." The Premier was at the cabinet table when that decision was made, but she didn't speak up. The leader of the NDP also had a chance to speak up, but she chose not to.

Speaker, here is my question: When will the Premier ask the NDP to join her in apologizing for what she has already admitted was not a good decision?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We cancelled the Slots at Racetracks Program because of problems around transparency and accountability of the program. There were three reports—the Sadinsky report, the Drummond report and our transition panel—that identified problems with the Slots at Racetracks Program.

What I have said is that, in the cancellation of the program, there was not due consideration of the impacts, and so that is why we put the transition panel in place. That is why we have developed a new program that's a five-year commitment to invest \$400 million to put the horse racing industry on a sustainable path.

I've been very clear that I want us to have a sustainable horse racing industry in Ontario. My predecessor, the Minister of Community and Social Services, when he was agriculture minister, put the transition panel in place. We are following those recommendations, Mr. Speaker.

I have been consistent in my message. We could not leave the SARP in place. It was not—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals already showed just how little they care for horse racing when they cut them off at the knees in 2012. The industry knows that, but they also know that Andrea Horwath and the NDP let this happen. They could have said no, but they sacrificed the industry for a few budget trinkets. They could have said no, but they said yes to save their political hides.

My question to the Premier: Could she inform the House which party and which leader were the only ones to take a principled stand against the Premier's not-good decision to kill the horse racing industry in 2012?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Before we move forward, I'll remind all members that we refer to each other in this place either by their title or their riding. I don't want to hear it again.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Disrespectful Tories.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Ha! Disrespectful?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, some people are.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm going to respond to the part of the question that seemed to imply that we don't have a plan in place that's going to work, and I'm going to quote from some of the people who actually know what's going on, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to quote from the Centre Wellington mayor, Joanne Ross-Zuj. She said, "For Centre Wellington, this is really good news." This is at the time of the announcement of the five-year plan. "For Centre Wellington, this is really good news...."

"Our agricultural industry has actually been boosted by this announcement...."

"[Wynne] has given five years and there is going to be an investment to make this industry productive and sustainable. It now puts people back to work...."

"From this day forward it is getting back into this working relationship we've had with the OLG and the racing industry—and now the community—to get back on track to plan for the future...."

"This is very good news."

Paul Walker, president of the Grand River Agricultural Society: "It's building a solid foundation for horse racing and moving forward...."

"They've put a lot of thought and work into this. The biggest part is the integration into the gaming industry. Without it, I don't think any of it would work."

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we go to the supplementary, I'm going to ask the Minister of Rural Affairs to come to order.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Only one party has consistently shown support for the industry. Only one party created SARP, which led to unprecedented success and thousands of jobs. Only one party stood against the 2012 Liberal-NDP budget. Only one party has produced a bold, achievable five-point plan to put the industry back on track. That's Tim Hudak and the Ontario PCs.

But, Mr. Speaker, the industry needs more than a meaningless, gimmicky motion from the NDP, a motion to restore what they themselves allowed to collapse. We need real action from a team with real credibility on the horse racing file. That's what we're offering. When will you get on board with our plan, Premier?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the party opposite put in place a program, and we have three reports that have made it clear that the SARP was unaccountable. It was not transparent, and it was bad public policy.

I have some more quotes from reactions to the announcement of the five-year partnership plan that we put in place. Dr. Ted Clarke, the Grand River Raceway general manager: "It's remarkably better than what our out-

look was a year ago today. We essentially went from a place of having no relationship with government and no support to a place where we now have a spot to make a plan. This provides a new set of building blocks to move forward. We have been given some tools with which to work, and hopefully we can put them to good work."

Alex Lawryk from the Rideau Carleton Raceway: "I feel very optimistic that, though it's not what we had before ... it definitely will sustain racing at Rideau and provide our patrons and the horsemen the critical mass that's required to maintain a program."

Brian Tropea from the Ontario Harness Horse Association: "The hard work happens now, you know. If you truly believe this is going to sustain the"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. This fall, the Legislature passed legislation to hire a Financial Accountability Officer, and the government said they planned to have that office up and running by the new year. Does the Premier still intend on meeting that goal, Speaker?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, it's critically important that we do have that Financial Accountability Officer in place. We have established a committee by members of the opposition to select that accountability officer. I, as the finance minister, am awaiting anxiously the work of that committee to be done by yourselves, by the members of both parties, including you, Mr. Speaker. So it's up to this House to bring forward the candidates, and I wait with bated breath.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, over a month ago, the Speaker asked each party to name an MPP to the all-party hiring committee. Why hasn't the government submitted their name, Speaker?

Hon. Charles Sousa: To the House leader, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, there is a process in place by which a panel is put together. I know we've discussed this at House leaders' meetings, and parties are coming forward with their names. We'll get the panel in place, and they will go through the usual process to choose a parliamentary officer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, the government said they planned to have this office up and running by the end of this year, but with a month to go until Christmas, they haven't even struck the hiring committee.

New Democrats indicated weeks ago that we are ready to get to work. We've named our member for the committee, Speaker. When will the Premier stop stalling and appoint a member to the hiring committee?

1050

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the member is playing games. She knows there's a process in place by which we work with the Clerk and we work with you to get a panel that is put together. That panel, in turn, advertises for the position. There's an interview process. It is the usual process that's followed for the hiring of a parliamentary officer. I expect that it will move forward very quickly with the selection of that individual through the usual process.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. The Financial Accountability Office was designed to stop spending scandals before they happen and to give people—the people of this province—real insight into Ontario's plans when they plan new programs. It was supported by all parties. It's supposed to be in place this year, but once again we hear a lot of Liberal talk and see no action.

Will the Premier submit her name to the hiring committee today and get this process, as was so adequately described by her House leader, up and running so we can get that office in place?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, the process was adequately described by the government House leader, and we are going to take part, Mr. Speaker. The name will be submitted, and we will move ahead. So I'm not exactly sure what problem the leader of the third party is identifying. I asked about this the other day. I know that a person has been identified, and that name will be submitted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People are really tired of seeing a government that can't seem to respect the value of public dollars, and they find it increasingly tough to trust a Liberal government that cannot deliver on a simple, basic commitment.

The Premier agreed to create the Financial Accountability Office, but now she's playing politics and holding up the actual creation of that office, because she's not naming the Liberal member for the office and, frankly, neither have the Conservatives named their member for the office. Why can't the Premier simply take a small step and provide a name today so that we can actually get to work on this office?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the leader of the third party knows full well that this item is on the agenda for House leaders tomorrow, that it is going to be discussed. We are fully compliant. We are going to be submitting a name. We want this to go forward. So, again, I have no idea what the leader of the third party is going on about. We are taking part. We know that it's important. We want the Financial Accountability Officer in place. We'll be submitting a name. My hope is that the opposition will be submitting a name as well, and the process will go forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, the clock is ticking. Your letter was dated October 7, and these two parties still have not named their member. This government seems to prefer hiding behind conversation instead of delivering results. We see it all the time. Instead of keeping a commitment to close corporate tax loopholes, they talked about closing them and then they kept them open. Instead of moving on a plan to cap CEO salaries, they talked about capping them and let the paycheques keep growing. Instead of making sure Ontarians have a Financial Accountability Office to help stop waste before it starts, the government continues to play games.

Why should the people of this province believe the Premier has plans to tackle waste and put people first if she can't even keep a basic commitment, like having that Financial Accountability Office up and running by the end of this year, which was a commitment that they made?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my previous answer, I think the leader of the third party knows that this item is on the agenda for House leaders tomorrow. The PA to the finance minister is going to be our member. That is the member that we're putting forward. We know who we're putting forward, and that name will be given tomorrow. So that work has been done. It has been done, Mr. Speaker.

So I guess I would just like to say that this is a process question. It's very important. We are in process, and we are working with the other parties.

Mr. Speaker, we would love to have the support of the third party in getting Bill 105, the small businesses act, passed. That's a substantive piece of work that needs to happen. It needs to be done by the end of the year, so my hope is that the leader of the third party will work with her members and we'll have the support of that party, because 60,000 businesses in the province will benefit from that.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is to the Premier this morning. Premier, a lot has happened over the last week or so, and some of it has gone unnoticed, so let me bring you up to speed.

The latest Ontario job numbers came out, and they show that we've lost almost 40,000 jobs in October, 16,000 more in the manufacturing sector in October. We got the devastating news that Heinz is closing after 104 years in operation in Leamington, throwing almost 800 people out of work and possibly thousands more in spinoff jobs and in the supplier sector.

A wind power company that your government promised would be able to set up inefficient intermittent wind turbines has now been given the green light to sue the Ontario taxpayers for a decision that you made. The OPP has cranked up its criminal investigation into the \$1.1-

billion scandal in your office. And there's a lot of other stuff too.

Premier, considering the mess that we're in, when are you going to admit that you're not up to this job?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I appreciate the very diffuse question from the member opposite, but I am focused on making the investments in people, the investments in infrastructure and the investments in a dynamic and innovative business climate that are going to allow this province to move to a future that's aspirational.

I understand that the role of the opposition is to oppose, but I also believe that it is the role of the opposition parties, particularly in a minority Parliament, to work with government so that we can work together in the best interests of the people of the province.

For example, we have a piece of legislation on the books, Bill 105, that needs to be passed by the end of the year: 60,000 small businesses will benefit. We would really like to see that the Conservative Party, which apparently supports business, might work with us so we can create those jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Premier, what we did learn from you last week was that you like to run. You're better at running away from the province's problems than you are at running the province of Ontario. If you spent a little more time dealing with the job that needs to be done instead of lacing up your sneakers, maybe the province that you lead wouldn't be on the road to ruin.

Our debt has doubled under your government, our deficit is at record levels, and the finance minister himself has said numerous times that balancing the books—well, that's not even really a priority for him. News released yesterday shows that the Bank of Canada may double our interest rates. That could cost us billions more dollars.

You were irresponsible with Heinz. Now thousands of Ontarians in the Leamington area are going to be out of work. How many more Ontarians are going to have to lose their jobs before you change course? Or are you just content to see the province that was once the leader in Confederation hit rock bottom?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I really believe, and we believe on this side of the House, that Ontario has a very bright future. In order for us to realize that future, it is extremely important that our excellent education system remain excellent and go to the next level. It is extremely important that our health care system—which is dealing with a demographic that is going to be challenging for the whole of the western world—is sustainable and that we transform it in ways that people get the services they need.

I believe that it is extremely important that we recognize the infrastructure challenges that are facing us as a country and as a province and that we invest in transit and that we invest in the roads and bridges in northern Ontario and in rural Ontario that are going to allow the communities to expand and thrive.

That is the focus that we have. That is the aspirational future we see for the province. I'm sorry that the opposition doesn't share that with us. If they did, we could do wonderful things together.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

New question.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

When our loved ones go into a long-term-care home, they deserve to know that they will be safe, comfortable and treated with respect and dignity. One of the ways to ensure that our loved ones receive the right care is an ironclad system of inspection and follow-up on incidents and deaths in long-term care.

1100

Until recently, the coroner's office investigated every 10th death in long-term-care homes, but now this level of oversight has been cut, while at the same time W5 exposed 61 resident-on-resident murders and tens of thousands of cases of violence. When is this government going to take violence in our long-term-care homes seriously and provide the proper oversight?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I can assure the member opposite, as I have on many occasions, that we take the safety of our patients, the residents in long-term-care homes, extremely seriously, and we take the safety of the workers in those homes extremely seriously.

We have passed legislation to allow for stronger enforcement and better inspections of Ontario's long-term-care homes, and sadly, neither opposition party actually supported that legislation. The coroner has recognized that we do have stronger oversight now than we did before.

Homes have to develop and implement a policy to protect zero tolerance of abuse and neglect. They have a duty to protect residents from abuse and to ensure that residents are not neglected. It is mandatory to report abuse. We take this as a very serious responsibility.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Last week, I wrote to the Ombudsman to ask his office to investigate whether the ministry was following up on its own investigations and orders to long-term-care homes. Shortly before Mr. Francisco DaSilva was killed at Castleview Wychwood Towers, the ministry had inspected the home and issued 10 orders that would have improved the conditions in the home.

When the ministry issues orders, people need to have confidence that someone is checking to make sure that those orders are complied with and that the problems get fixed. Did the minister ever follow up on those orders to ensure that they were being enforced?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can speak to the improvements in the inspections and the follow-up since we

took office. When we were elected in 2003, there were 59 inspectors working for the ministry. We now have over 140, and we are continuing to recruit new inspectors to add to that. We've hired 64 new inspectors since September of this year.

Last year, the ministry conducted almost 2,400 inspections. Homes are inspected, on average, 3.7 times per year. We're working very hard to improve the quality of care, and we are not going to stop improving, because we're committed to making sure that everyone who comes into long-term care has the confidence that they will get the best possible care.

SENIORS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the minister responsible for seniors affairs. The minister recently joined the Premier and the Minister of Government Services in Waterloo for a very important announcement: the introduction of a new seniors grant program.

This very significant announcement has been extremely well received by constituents across the province, especially the seniors in my riding of York South–Weston. My office has already received numerous phone calls from local senior groups expressing their interest and gratitude for this government's commitment to the seniors of this province.

Would the minister please inform the House on how this new grant program will improve the lives of seniors in Ontario?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I want to thank the remarkable member from York South–Weston for her tireless efforts in advocating for seniors in her riding.

Indeed, I'm very proud to inform the House that following the recent economic statement, our government has introduced yet another first in Ontario's history: a grant program specifically dedicated to seniors. It is our government's commitment to provide more seniors across our province with the support they need to lead active, engaged lives through a new Seniors Community Grant Program. With this grant, we continue to build upon the success of Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors. It is extremely important to me, as the minister responsible for seniors affairs, to government and, I believe, every member of the House to continue our strongest efforts to provide for our seniors, making this province the best province to age in.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you to the minister for that answer. Let me say that the seniors in my riding of York South–Weston appreciate a government that recognizes the important contributions that seniors have made and continue to make in shaping our great province. They are very excited to have a minister with the sole responsibility to advocate on their behalf and to have the opportunity to receive support from the first grant program in Ontario dedicated solely to supporting seniors.

I especially know that some local seniors' groups in my riding, like the St. Fidelis Golden Age Club and the

Pelmo Park seniors, will appreciate a grant program aimed at assisting seniors' community groups. Can the minister tell us more about this grant program?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Thank you, again, to the member. The grant aims to help seniors' groups of all sizes. I'm proud to say that the grant will better allow our seniors to connect within their own communities. The grant provides funding to not-for-profit groups and organizations for projects that encourage great social inclusion, volunteerism, minimize isolation, and encourage participation and community engagement for seniors across our province.

The grant ranges from \$500 to \$10,000 to help support initiatives that will allow seniors to contribute to all aspects of a community life, and that is aimed at non-profit seniors' groups.

Again, let me say that seniors built our province. It is most important that we provide them all the investments that they need to continue to live an active and connected life in their community.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the minister of the Pan Am Games. Minister, yesterday we had a late-show sitting following my dissatisfaction with your answer to the question I asked regarding the Pan Am Games' transit plan's budget. All I've been looking for was a simple answer, a ballpark figure at the very least of how much the taxpayer will fork over for the Pan Am Games' transit plan. I do not think that that was an unreasonable request.

So you rose yesterday and talked about the cost of the athletes' village and expansion of Ontario's trails network, but again made no mention of any costs associated with the transit plan. Minister, the games are less than two years away. Can you tell me right now: What is the budget for the Pan Am Games' transit plan?

Hon. Michael Chan: I believe the member opposite had Minister Murray and his deputy for answering these questions in the estimates committee yesterday or the day before.

It's truly unfortunate that he cannot comprehend the fact that where we are now in the planning stages is completely normal. The transportation costs are continuously evolving. We have a game footprint that is over 10,000 kilometres square, with 14 host municipalities to coordinate and come to agreement with. The games are an unprecedented event in our province, and we have never experienced anything on this scale. It cannot be compared to a business plan. But if you cannot understand and will not acknowledge those facts, than I really feel sorry for you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Minister, what I can't comprehend right now is the fact that the Minister of Transportation announced the budget in estimates committee. Yet at 6 o'clock, after the ministry announced the \$70-million to \$90-million budget, you still could not answer the

question of how much was in the budget. I find the lack of communication between the two ministries on this multi-million-dollar project very disturbing.

Minister, throughout this Pan Am fiasco, you've overseen cost overruns, secret budgets and a well-paid executive team that nickels and dimes the taxpayers by expensing for coffee and doughnuts. So it doesn't surprise me when you said yesterday that the opposition's line of questioning on the matter was ignorant, disrespectful and damaging. Well, as a member of the only party here that stands up for the taxpayer, I find your aversion to transparency ignorant, disrespectful and damaging.

Minister, will you apologize to the constituents of my riding and all Ontarians for your complete mismanagement of this file?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

1110

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I knew the party opposite had a reading problem; we now know they have a comprehension deficit. Mr. Speaker, they asked for the information. The member from Barrie got it. I went out of my way. My office personally phoned him, as did Minister Chan's, to offer him a technical briefing. We have kept you in the loop.

Mr. Speaker, I was the host mayor of the last Pan Am Games. In Manitoba, people were excited.

You have been an embarrassment to the people of Ontario. You have shamed us in front of the world. You protest like children in front of international conferences. You are diminishing the work of volunteers. You are diminishing the work of athletes. You are shameful in the partisan ignorance you brought to it. You don't even understand—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All right. Now I'll name—ooh, nice and quiet.

New question.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport and responsible for the Pan/Parapan Games. Speaker, it seems that this government is making a habit about playing cute when it comes to the real cost of the games. Today, there are questions about a ballpark figure for the estimated total cost of the games, and we are yet again being stonewalled by the government. Even more concerning is that Ontario is the guarantor for any deficits, but the government still can't tell us what the total price tag for the games will be.

Speaker, will this minister tell Ontarians when he will stop playing games when it comes to the cost of the Pan Am Games?

Hon. Michael Chan: As I said before this morning, we had a technical briefing that we offered to the press and also to the opposition critics here.

Speaker, we're very clear in terms of the budget of the Pan Am Games. Ontario contributed \$500 million to the 2015 operating committee, and the federal government as well contributed \$500 million. The rest, about \$400 million, was contributed by local governments and also donors and also the revenue from tickets.

On top of that, Speaker, we're also building the village, which is \$700 million. This is outside the \$1.4 billion. This is a project that is 20 years in the running. The athletes' village will revitalize the West Don Lands. It will create a vibrant community: 500 George Brown—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Michael Chan: —will be there and also a YMCA operating there. Also, it will provide affordable housing for the less fortunate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, Speaker, it appears we have confusion as a new sport.

There seems to be a theme with this government's inability to come clean when it comes to costs. Today, we heard the government is likely recouping \$65 million of the \$700 million invested in the athletes' village, but again, we don't have confirmation. Ontarians want to be assured that the games are going to come in on budget, as they keep saying, and the best way to do this being to lay out the costs in plain figures.

When will this minister and this government commit to providing all the numbers and stop playing these games?

Hon. Michael Chan: I just mentioned the athletes' village. I think that is clear to the member opposite.

Speaker, let me talk about the success of the games and also, hosting the games, the benefits of having the games here. Hosting the games will trigger investment in new and existing sport and recreation infrastructure; create a legacy fund to support the operation of facilities post-games; create 26,000 new jobs, 15,000 jobs directly related to the games investments, and another 11,000-plus projected as a result of the games-related investments and tourism. It will attract 250,000 visitors and bring 10,000 athletes and team officials to Ontario. It will build and train a team of approximately 20,000 volunteers. I am excited to be a part of that, so to answer your question, I will be enjoying the games.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is for the Attorney General. Attorney General, it is my understanding that last week you attended a federal-provincial-territorial meeting where ministers of justice and public safety from across the country meet to discuss nationwide priorities. Access to justice is a big concern for the people of my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood, so I'm pleased to know that the Ontario discussion also included these initiatives to build a strong, more accessible justice system.

Could the Attorney General please tell this House about the important provincial justice issues he raised on behalf of all Ontarians?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'd like to thank the member for his question. Yes, last week, Minister Meilleur and myself—

Interjection: Her. Her question.

Hon. John Gerretsen: That's what I said. I'd like to thank her for the question.

Last week, Minister Meilleur and myself attended the federal-provincial-territorial ministers of justice meeting in Whitehorse, and there were a number of issues that were discussed with other ministers from other provinces and territories as well. One of the key initiatives that we highlighted was the improving of our justice system with setting up new aboriginal representation on our jury roll system, which is very important, particularly to the aboriginal community.

One of the other issues that we discussed was the funding of legal aid. You may recall that in our budget we are supplying an extra \$30 million for legal aid around the province, particularly for clinics and for family health. It's interesting to note that the system used to be, at one time, a 50-50 proposition between the federal government and the provincial government. Right now, Ontario spends about 80% of the legal aid money, so we urge the federal government to come up with at least—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I thank the Attorney General for that answer. It is good to hear that this government is helping those in the justice system who need it most. My community of Scarborough-Guildwood has one of the largest off-reserve aboriginal populations in the province, and I know they would be pleased to hear your initiative to increase aboriginal representation in the jury system.

But this brings me to my next point: The off-reserve aboriginal communities in my riding continue to express significant concern about the inadequate and unsustainable resources for First Nations police services and communities. While the First Nations Policing Program agreements were signed this year, First Nations communities and policing leaders expect significant enhancements in subsequent agreements. Despite the operational pressures, the increase in office workload and community populations, the full-time equivalent complement in any of Ontario's First Nations policing agreements has not increased since 2006.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Attorney General, what was the message that this government delivered at the federal-provincial-territorial meeting regarding First Nations policing?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'll refer this to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the member from Scarborough-Guildwood for this question. I made it very clear at the meeting that First Nations policing needs to be addressed. Ontario is very supportive of

First Nations policing, but the federal government's approach has to change.

The federal government will not increase the budget until March 31, 2014, and there are more problems. They have a retention problem. They have a housing problem. They have a communications network problem; it's almost non-existent in First Nations communities. So I have called on the federal government to address this. They have eliminated the police officer recruitment fund, and the province invested \$4 million to make sure that these police officers will remain in the First Nations community.

1120

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games. Minister, I'm not sure if you've played sports, but I want to try to explain something to you. Before you play the game, you need to know and have some rules. Otherwise, you have people running around not knowing what to do, which pretty well describes mayhem, which is how you have handled the Pan Am Games so far. It's really shameful, but it's really no surprise to learn that the budget is now over \$2 billion. That's what happens, Minister, when you have no rules and no plan.

Minister, you wouldn't run a peewee hockey practice without any rules. Why do you think it's acceptable to do so for a \$2-billion international sporting event like the Pan Am Games?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Minister.

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, another ridiculous, rubbish allegation.

Let me be clear one more time about those numbers. Funding of the athletes' village has always been clear, as part of Ontario's host jurisdiction responsibilities and budget. It was stated in the 2009 bid book—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham, come to order.

Hon. Michael Chan: —2015 games budget of \$1.4 billion. It was announced again April 26, 2009, by former Minister George Smitherman when the site was unveiled at the West Don Lands.

As recently as our 2013 budget, it was reaffirmed that the athletes' village is separate from our \$500-million contribution to the organizing committee's budget. The investments in the Pan Am athletes' village have been in plain sight for over—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Michael Chan: —years.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the minister—I guess I learned something today: He’s a pretty good dodge ball player.

Minister, you’ve spent two years evading our basic questions, like what it’s going to cost to provide security for these games. Now we know why: The budget is completely out of control. It’s more than double the \$1.4 billion you’ve been telling us, and we’re still counting.

This is no longer about you and mismanagement. It’s clear that you’re in over your head. You’re not up to the job. So I’m going to ask you, Minister: Can you tell Ontarians the cost of security for these games? If you can’t, will you resign and give the job to somebody else who can start giving us those answers?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, security is paramount. We will not take any risks with the safety of our citizens.

It is truly unfortunate that the member opposite cannot comprehend the fact that where we are in the planning stages now is completely normal. The security costs are continuously evolving as the game plan is evolving.

We have 10,000 athletes and coaches who will be visiting our province. We have 250,000 visitors who will be visiting our province. We have 14 host municipalities and multiple venues to coordinate and come to agreement with. The games are an unprecedented event in our province. These are the largest games—in 80 years—ever hosted by Ontario.

The games are well planned, and we are on the right track.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Yesterday the minister stood in this House and announced changes to workplace safety training: an online training module and a mandatory poster. But I did not hear anything about training standards for fall prevention. Ministry of Labour staff have already stated that training standards will not be ready until 2014 or 2015. We know that a standard for fall prevention training was ready in June 2011.

I asked the minister three weeks ago why that standard is not already in place. Can the minister tell me when he will commit to making safety a priority in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for the question. Directly to her, safety is the number one priority of this government. As a result, Speaker, as you know and all members know, we appointed Tony Dean and an expert panel back in 2009 after the tragic accident that took place that took four workers’ lives in the city of Toronto. As a result of the expert panel, we have recommendations to bring about the biggest transformation in health and safety in the province of Ontario in 30 years. We are implementing, one by one, every single recom-

mendation that was actually approved by this Legislature unanimously, for the last couple of years.

I was very proud yesterday to announce in this House that we are going to be introducing mandatory awareness training for all workers and supervisors, and I thank all members for their support of that initiative.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Years go by, and this government consults. Years go by, and workers die. Since June, nine workers—nine workers—have died from falling accidents in this province, including Christopher Birdsell in Hamilton, Kevin Raposo in Toronto and Nick Lalonde in Waterloo.

The minister has the recommendations from the 2011 Dean report, which were wholeheartedly embraced by our government. Fall prevention training was a priority to be implemented in 12 months. The province’s workers deserve more than posters.

As we have seen in Newfoundland, mandatory training standards will save lives. When will fall prevention training become mandatory in Ontario? When?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I really encourage the member opposite to perhaps read the Dean report. She will see that the recommendations are made but require a lot of extensive work in terms of exactly what those safety standards will be.

We have been working extremely hard through our chief prevention officer—which is the first of its kind in all of Canada—in consulting with labour, in consulting with businesses and municipalities to make sure that we have got the right kind of standards in place. There are already standards in place; we’re looking at further enhancing them. There are draft standards out for consultation as we speak, and very soon we’ll be announcing the implementation of those standards.

Let me be absolutely clear: One life lost in a workplace is one too many. We will continue to work extremely hard to make sure that every single worker in this province is safe. Let’s not play politics with the lives of our workers.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I’ve got a question this morning for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Most of us take the simple act of breathing for granted, but every year more and more people across this province are being diagnosed with a horrible disease called chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, COPD. It includes chronic bronchitis; it includes emphysema. What it does is it slowly damages a sufferers’ airways and makes it harder and harder for them to breathe. Unfortunately, to date, there’s no cure for this disease.

Speaker, being that today is World COPD Day, I ask the minister through you: What are we doing specifically

to prevent more Ontarians from contracting this deadly disease?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Oakville for this question. Anyone who suffers from COPD or has a loved one who suffers from COPD knows how horrible a disease this is. It takes a toll on a person's lungs, but it also takes a toll on their life. It can prevent people from participating in activities that the rest of us take for granted. It gets worse as you grow older, and it can lead to premature death.

COPD is treatable, but it is not curable. But it is preventable. We know the best way to prevent COPD is by stopping smoking. That's why our government has taken very strong action to toughen our tobacco laws and encourage Ontarians who do smoke to quit smoking, and, better yet, not to take it up in the first place.

Earlier this week, I was pleased to introduce new legislation that, if passed, will go further to protect Ontarians from getting COPD.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'm pleased to see that we are taking that strong action that's necessary that's going to protect Ontarians from getting further COPD. I know Ontario's a leader in Canada when it comes to controlling tobacco. Among other things, with the support of most members of this House, anyway, we banned smoking indoors, in public places and in closed spaces. We've also banned it in motor vehicles when children are present.

1130

The minister mentioned the new legislation she introduced earlier this week. Through you, Speaker, would the minister please tell this House a little bit more, expand about this next step in the government's Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am pleased to say that our smoking rate is coming down, Speaker. We currently have the second-lowest smoking rates in Canada, but that is not good enough. We aspire to have the lowest smoking rates in Canada, and that means we have to make significant progress when it comes to smoking.

So, as I said earlier, the best way to reduce those rates is to prevent people from starting in the beginning. That's why our legislation would ban the sale of flavoured tobacco products that make smoking more appealing to young people. It would double the fines for people who sell tobacco to kids; it would make them the toughest fines in the country.

It would also protect Ontarians from second-hand smoke by prohibiting smoking in playgrounds and sports fields and in restaurant and bar patios.

This is action that we are taking to save lives, and I urge all members of this House to support that legislation.

FIREFIGHTING

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, you recently announced the closure of the MNR fire base in Pembroke, and I have

to wonder how well that decision was thought out. While the loss of jobs and the impact on local families will be devastating in and of itself, you have significantly compromised our ability to fight forest fires with this decision.

As you know, response time is critical. Small fires spotted quickly can be dealt with quite easily. But once they get a foothold, it can be disastrous.

Minister, I've met with senior members of the fire crews in Pembroke. Yes, they're worried about their jobs, but safety remains their paramount concern.

I would ask that you would postpone this decision for one year until a thorough analysis of its effects can be done—and, Minister, not your analysis: a thorough analysis so we can understand the effects of this decision. Will you do that, Minister?

Hon. David Orazietti: I appreciate the question. The member is well aware that the Ministry of Natural Resources is going through a modernization and transformation with respect to our fire operations. We'll continue to operate from 33 fire bases in the province of Ontario.

Our top priority with respect to this program is to protect people, property and our natural resources. The member is aware I did speak to the mayor, Ed Jacyno, in Pembroke, as well as the mayor in Kirkland Lake, Bill Enouy, as well as the MPPs who are affected by this in their particular ridings, and let them know, with respect to the transformation, that this was happening.

In the case of Pembroke, the one full-time employee will be offered a relocation to Haliburton, and two full-time staff—the other two full-time staff—will continue to be in place. The seasonal staff of approximately 20, of which there are six in Pembroke, will be offered other opportunities throughout the province, and we fully expect to have a similar complement, basically the same number of fire staff, moving forward in the next fire season.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister, I heard you talk about how this will not affect safety; I vehemently disagree. I've heard you say this will save money; I don't believe it for a moment. Your reallocations are actually going to cost more.

You do not take into consideration all of the non-fire-related activities that fire crews provide for the citizens of that area and for the MNR, such as rebuilding of docks, brushing, and assistance when spring floods occur.

To add fuel to the fire—no pun intended—I know Ed Jacyno well. Perhaps you should have talked to Tammy Stewart, the mayor of Head, Clara and Maria, where they have no firefighting capabilities whatsoever. They border along our crown jewel of Algonquin Park, and they don't have a fire department. They rely on the MNR to provide their fire services. You're taking that away, and it's just telling them now that they're going to be supported out of Haliburton.

Please, Minister, this is a bad decision. It's going to come back to haunt you. Will you reconsider and post-

pone this for one year until a proper analysis can be done?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. David Orazietti: I say to the member, our government has recently made an investment of \$47 million in additional support for three fire bases in Ontario—in Haliburton, in Sudbury and in Armstrong—as well as, for the first time, flight simulation equipment that Ontario pilots will have in this province, where they previously had to leave Ontario.

Our concern, obviously, is to be nimble and able to respond where these fires arise. We'll continue to have 33 bases in the province of Ontario. We will be able to respond in a timely way. We'll have virtually the same complement of fire protection services staff out there on the landscape, and we're continuing to make investments.

I remind the member, as well, that we were on a trajectory in this ministry to lose another \$40 million in our budget. I want to commend the Premier for putting \$40 million back into the budget of MNR to support additional investments in this province.

SNOWMOBILING

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question this morning is to the Premier. Ontario Hydro has announced that it will cut off snowmobilers from using trails in hydro corridors unless they pay half of the property taxes on that land. Needless to say, snowmobile clubs do not have the funds to cover property taxes for hydro corridors, and there is now talk that the province wants the cash-strapped municipalities to cover the cost, in an effort to download.

When will this government stop passing the buck and come up with a real solution so that snowmobilers can use trails uninterrupted this winter season?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is not a matter of a cash grab; it's a matter of insurance and safety issues between the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Ministry of Energy. The decision is under review right now because of some of the concerns. This is an old piece of legislation.

I will gladly follow up with the member.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Once again to the Premier: During constituency week, I met with the Espanola and District Snowmobile Club and heard from many other snowmobile clubs in Algoma-Manitoulin that are not-for-profit organizations that help bring tourism to the province and to their communities.

This government has shut down trails and parks across Ontario, shut down tourist information stations and restricted access to crown land. Now it wants to restrict winter recreational activities for Ontarians. This just isn't right.

Will the Premier intervene and allow trails to stay open for snowmobilers in Ontario?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, as I said, this matter is under review. I will take it up with the member opposite once the review is complete.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. The benefits that the forestry sector brings to Ontario's economy are of critical importance to many communities in Ontario.

Speaker, I'm sure that you're aware, as many are in the House, that the forestry industry has faced some challenges in recent years, due in part to the crash of the US housing market and the global economic downturn. Our government is working hard to strengthen Ontario's forestry industry and bring jobs in this sector back to northern Ontario.

The Ministry of Natural Resources made an announcement last week in Wawa about a new wood pellet production facility that will bring value-added jobs to the township, as well as diversify the economy. Could the minister please explain how this new facility will benefit northern Ontario?

Hon. David Orazietti: I appreciate the question from the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. This is an important question.

The forestry industry is seeing a resurgence that our government is wholeheartedly behind, and we're doing everything we can to help boost jobs in the forestry sector.

Last week, I was in Wawa. A company called Rentech was there as well, and they're investing in a plant in Wawa that has been idle since about 2009. This is going to create 40 jobs, 100 construction jobs to reconfigure the plant and 200 forestry jobs in surrounding communities. It is an incredibly important investment for a community that has struggled in recent years, and this is another sign that the forestry industry is rebounding.

The CEO of Rentech had this to say: "We are grateful to have the backing of Ontario and the Ministry of Natural Resources to support our investments. We're excited about building safe, world-class businesses, which will provide regional jobs and economic opportunities for Ontario's local communities and First Nations."

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Premier on a point of order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to reread a quote into the record, because I missed a piece in the middle, and it was garbled. I just want to make sure it was clear.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A simple correction of the quote?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, it is a correction, because there was a chunk that I believe I missed. I haven't seen the Hansard, so I don't know, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Then offer them what you believe is the chunk, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Okay. I believe it was this sentence: "I feel very optimistic that, though it's not what we had before the program was cancelled, it definitely will sustain racing at Rideau and provide our patrons and the horsemen the critical mass that's required to maintain a program." I believe that's the piece that I missed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I allowed that to happen because correcting the record is a point of order, and it can only be correcting the record instead of re-quoting.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1500.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Ms. Cindy Forster: On a point of order, Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to wear these lovely purple ribbons for National Child Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Welland, on a point of order, is seeking unanimous consent to wear the purple ribbons. Do we agree? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to welcome special guests who are front-line staff and proud members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees. They're from Hamilton Children's Aid, the city of Toronto's Association of Community Centres, Durham Children's Aid, the Lanark-Leeds-Grenville family and child centre, Haldimand-Norfolk children's aid, Family and Children's Services Niagara, Toronto Catholic children's aid, Toronto children's aid and Toronto child care centres. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would like to welcome my staff to the chamber, if they were here, to bring me my private member's bill. Oh, there they are.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think that's called jocularly.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MAITLAND RIVER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Today I'm proud to stand and acknowledge the opening of Maitland River Elementary School in Wingham, in my riding of Huron-Bruce. It has been recognized that the opening of new schools is very significant, as it may only happen in a community once in a generation. While Maitland River has been open since the beginning of the school year, I was proud to attend the official grand opening on November 7. This event was well attended by students, teachers, family and friends and community members.

This is more than just the opening of a new school. As five communities—East Wawanosh, Blyth, Brussels, Turnberry and Wingham—unite at Maitland River, this begins a new chapter on educating youth in north Huron.

This school is modern. It has the most up-to-date technology, and every classroom has Smart Boards and wireless connectivity throughout the school. The building is just amazing. It has been designed in a modern and environmentally sustainable fashion, and it encourages positive learning.

This school will encourage youth to reach their full potential. I tip my hat to everyone who was involved in the opening, including principal Alice McDowell, the teachers, Avon Maitland District School Board staff, those responsible for the construction, students, parents and everyone in between.

I'd also like to thank my tour guides, Josh Pham and Sam Young, for their in-depth tour.

To the students, I would like to share with you: Let your purple-and-white spirit shine during your years at Maitland River, and just like your mascot, you'll indeed triumph.

FIREFIGHTING

Mr. John Vanthof: In May 2012, a state of emergency was declared in Kirkland Lake. Tinder-dry conditions had resulted in a massive forest fire that threatened the town and forced a partial evacuation. The future of the town rested on the direction of the wind and the valiant efforts of the emergency response team. After nine days, the weather changed, the fire retreated and the state of emergency was lifted. "Thank you, firefighters" signs lined the windows of homes and businesses throughout the town.

Imagine their concern when, just 18 months later, the Minister of Natural Resources announced that the Kirkland MNR fire station would be closed and that the 14 seasonal firefighters stationed there would be no more. Under the Liberals' MNR transformation plan, an area the size of France will no longer have any localized firefighting capabilities.

Emergency central stations are very important, as witnessed in the fire in KL, but the local team prevented several other small fires from adding to that inferno. Local teams prevent small brush fires from becoming costly major forest fires. Local teams have the ability to monitor and control situations that could lead to major forest fires.

The majority of the area covered by the Kirkland Lake fire station has no municipal fire coverage, and there is concern that the volunteer municipal forces that do exist may be overwhelmed because of the removal of the local MNR fire coverage.

On behalf of the residents of Timiskaming-Cochrane, I request that the minister put this decision on hold and conduct an independent review to ensure that the fire-protection needs of the area will be met and to ensure that expected cost savings will not be burned up by having to fight larger fires.

FORD MOTOR CO.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise in the House today to share some very good news from my riding involving Ford.

It has been 60 years since the first car rolled off the line at the Ford Motor Co. in Oakville. When Ford first opened its doors in 1953, it changed Oakville's landscape forever. It opened the door to more jobs, a stronger economy and more infrastructure in Oakville.

The auto sector, as we all know, is a vital part of our economy, both across the province and locally in Oakville. Ford is a major supporter of the Oakville Chamber of Commerce; many local charities, including the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation; and the United Way of Oakville. We know that the auto sector is a really important part of our economy, a significant employer in the province and a very integral part of Oakville's local economy.

Speaker, you'll know these are very competitive times. Ontario has proven it can compete on the global stage, and we remain to this day one of the top auto-producing jurisdictions in all of North America.

Recently, Premier Kathleen Wynne was in Oakville to announce the Ontario government's partnership with the federal government and Ford Canada to upgrade Oakville's assembly line. That's going to secure more than 2,800 jobs. Moving forward, our government is going to continue to support innovation, manufacturing and Ontario businesses just like Ford.

On behalf of this House, I congratulate Ford on 60 years of success. Best wishes for an incredible future.

GIRL GUIDES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is a pleasure to rise and stand in my place as the MPP for the 194th Girl Guides, who meet at St. Andrew Catholic school in Barrhaven.

Last Wednesday, I had the opportunity to visit with Carole Lillie's Girl Guides, with my daughter, Victoria, who is also a Brownie.

The Girl Guides asked me many good questions. They asked me things like, how do I balance being an MPP and a mom, and they asked me what my favourite part of my job was. They even asked me how I get back and forth to Queen's Park, and I told them, "Porter Airlines."

I also learned some neat things about these Girl Guides. They are helping the World Wildlife Fund save polar bears; they have collected used shoes for the Soles4Souls campaign; and they have done a fundraiser for our very own Roger's House, a pediatric palliative care centre in the city of Ottawa.

The 194th Girl Guides were not only generous hosts to me and my daughter, but, as you can tell, they were very good teachers, Speaker.

So as they meet tonight, on behalf of the Ontario Legislature, I would like to thank the Girl Guides for reminding me that community leaders come in all shapes, sizes and ages. These girls are community leaders, and I encourage them to always be prepared for the challenges

in our communities so that we may always be able to rely on them to rise to them.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Michael Mantha: Almost daily, constituents are raising concerns over access to high-quality and dependable health care. Many in the north struggle with travelling great distances to seek medical attention—continued loss of services, shortages of doctors and long wait times are among the many health-care-related complaints we receive.

I continue to work with many communities and organizations to bring funding to health care facilities in our riding.

Last week, a standing committee was struck to review the local health integration networks' 14 local authorities that plan, coordinate and fund health care services in Ontario. I want to acknowledge the hard work of my colleague Nickel Belt MPP France Gélinas, NDP health and long-term-care critic, who has been calling for this review for three years.

Currently, the committee has placed advertisements looking for Ontarians who would like to address this committee. Given the significant interest, there will be eight days of hearings scheduled in January and February of 2014. We look forward to having LHIN officials, hospital managers and other health care practitioners share their expertise and experiences.

We have received numerous complaints from constituents over the years, so New Democrats tabled a motion in March 2010 to address these concerns. It has taken this government a great deal of time to move forward with this motion.

That being said, we are pleased that our efforts have paid off, and we look forward to working hard on these committees and making real changes to improve the quality and dependability of health care in northern Ontario and across this province.

1510

VILLAGE CLUB ADULT DAY CENTRE

Ms. Soo Wong: A couple of weeks ago, I had the pleasure of joining seniors, community members and health professionals in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the adult day program at Shepherd Village. Known as the Village Club Adult Day Centre, this program is for seniors living in Shepherd Village and in their community. It offers care and support in a social environment to individuals over the age of 65.

The Village Club Adult Day Centre was opened on October 8, 2008. It keeps seniors healthy, active and independent in their own communities. The program is a great way for our seniors to interact with one another. It gives the caregivers some much-needed respite time. It also provides services for seniors who may be experiencing both physical or cognitive impairment, isolation or other health challenges.

The program is currently providing support to 35 families, and to date has served over 120 families in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt. Participants have an opportunity to meet friends, learn new activities, or rest and relax. Some of the activities include walking and exercise, cooking and baking, swimming, and gardening.

I want to commend Shepherd Village for recognizing the need in our community, providing the adult day program, but, more importantly, to congratulate everyone involved in the fifth anniversary of the Village Club Adult Day Centre.

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm really pleased to rise today to raise awareness and support for World COPD Day, on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD, is a long-term lung disease that is often caused by smoking, which accounts for roughly 80% of cases. But COPD also includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema.

Although currently there is no cure for COPD, treatment options include, of course, quitting smoking, taking COPD medications and joining a pulmonary rehabilitation program. Organizations like the Ontario Lung Association have brought widespread awareness to this disease, in addition to offering key supports to patients and families. The Lung Association has a 1-800 helpline for patients and families to receive support. It can be accessed by dialing 1-866-717-COPD. In addition, it provides information to patients as to where they can receive treatment by region.

In my riding of Whitby–Oshawa, patients can visit the Lakeridge hospital for care, and there's also a COPD support group that operates out of the Abilities Centre in Whitby.

Given that COPD is one of the leading causes of emergency room visits in Ontario, we need to do whatever we can to assist patients in managing their symptoms. I want to encourage all members of this House and all members of the public to become more familiar with COPD and the local treatment options available in their riding.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I stand today to recognize all of the incredible work being done by Toronto Police Service's 43 division in my community of Scarborough–Guildwood. On November 1, I had the pleasure of attending a session hosted by 43 division called #DontBFooled at West Hill Collegiate Institute, also attended by the Minister of Consumer Services. Students performed skits to illustrate the importance of online safety. Constable Randall Arsenault and other fellow officers spoke to teens about being cautious about what information and pictures you post online, and

emphasized the importance of protecting your finances and identity. This is part of Constable Arsenault's bigger strategy to reach out and build bridges with young people through his role as a community engagement officer. Another part of his role is increasing the presence of 43 division online in social media in order to build trust between officers and youth.

It is because of efforts like this undertaken by 43 division that Scarborough–Guildwood has become a safer place for people to live, work and play. I am so proud to say that 43 division has now gone 13 consecutive months without a homicide. So thank you again to 43 division and Superintendent Mark Fenton for your commitment to safety and community engagement. You truly are making Scarborough–Guildwood a safer and better place to live, and we are so fortunate for everything you do for our community.

NATIONAL CHILD DAY

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to rise in the House today, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to recognize National Child Day. Twenty-four years ago, Canada adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and joined countries across the world to achieve what we can only do together: protecting our children, educating our children, and creating the opportunities that they deserve. That is a promise we renew to our children and youth every November 20.

All of us have an interest in providing the best opportunities for our sons and daughters. Our future depends on healthy young people; they're the key to building a strong and prosperous society. As MPPs, we have a unique opportunity of connecting with them by dialoguing on important issues, by attending youth events and responding to their issues.

In the last two years since being elected, I had the pleasure of meeting and hearing from dozens of young people in my riding, some of whom reached out to dialogue about the issue of suicide and poverty that affects many families in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

We need to keep encouraging our kids to turn to us because we will hear them out and we will represent their voice and we'll take great strides in ensuring their safety and well-being.

So, Mr. Speaker, you can imagine my disappointment when I read in the news that the province was cutting \$1 million from Grey county's child care programs. The news is troubling as well as perplexing, especially in light of the government's directive to make the Early Years program a priority area of action. Clearly, this cut is not in line with the guiding principles of its Early Years and family supports programs.

I respectfully ask members on that side of the House to revisit their budget for children and youth as we mark National Child Day and renew our promise that we will always strive to do what is in the best interests of our children.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Natural Resources concerning the Pembroke fire base. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I would like to seek unanimous consent—and I believe we have it—to put forward a motion without notice regarding the late show.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Nepean–Carleton is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I move that the late show requested by the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke directed to the Minister of Natural Resources scheduled for tonight be rescheduled for 6 p.m. on Tuesday, November 26, 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Nepean–Carleton is seeking unanimous consent to change the late show to—what was it again?

Mr. John O'Toole: The 26th.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —the 26th at 6 p.m. Do we agree? Agreed. Thank you.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 55, An Act to amend the Collection Agencies Act, the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 and the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 55, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les agences de recouvrement, la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur et la Loi de 2002 sur le courtage commercial et immobilier et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 3, 2013, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR ADVERTISING ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PUBLICITÉ DES ORGANISMES DU SECTEUR PARAPUBLIC

Mr. Bisson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 134, An Act respecting broader public sector advertising / *Projet de loi 134, Loi concernant la publicité des organismes du secteur parapublic.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, we'll get a chance to debate this later on in the month, but the bill is in keeping with New Democrats putting forward ideas that give greater clarity and transparency to how we spend money in this province, in this case as related to advertising by the government of Ontario.

RYAN'S LAW (ENSURING ASTHMA FRIENDLY SCHOOLS), 2013

LOI RYAN DE 2013 POUR ASSURER LA CRÉATION D'ÉCOLES ATTENTIVES À L'ASTHME

Mr. Yurek moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to protect pupils with asthma / *Projet de loi 135, Loi protégeant les élèves asthmatiques.*
1520

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: This will be discussed on December 5 during my debate day, but it's a cousin to Sabrina's Law. In fact, the short title of the bill is Ryan's Law (Ensuring Asthma Friendly Schools). This ensures that, for our children with asthma in our school system—that there's a policy throughout Ontario that's uniform and ensures the safety of our students with asthma.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ADDICTION SERVICES

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, November 18 to 24 is National Addictions Awareness Week in Canada. This gives us the opportunity to learn more about sub-

stance abuse and addiction, as well as to bring awareness to an issue that touches too many families in Ontario.

Addictions are complex, and they often go hand in hand with mental health challenges. Unfortunately, there remains a stigma around addictions and mental health issues that sometimes makes people reluctant to seek treatment.

While there's much work to do, we are making progress with the help of steadfast partners fighting at our side, organizations including Addictions and Mental Health Ontario, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, the Canadian Mental Health Association, and many others; and of course the front-line physicians, nurses, community support workers and families who help many people through difficult times.

Because addiction is a complex problem and it comes in many forms, it is necessary that government take a multi-faceted approach to address it. Our government understands the need for an overarching strategy that addresses both mental health and addictions. Over two years ago we released our 10-year comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy, called Open Minds, Healthy Minds. The strategy is intended to create a more responsive and integrated system.

We started with children and youth. The reasons for this are clear: Mental health and addictions issues most often start at a young age, and then can stay with a person all of his or her life. If we can help kids, we can help the adults they will become.

Speaker, I want to emphasize that addressing mental health and addiction issues is a shared responsibility, particularly for children and youth. We heard loud and clear that government ministries need to work together to address the challenges faced by people with these issues, and we listened. Greater collaboration amongst our ministries has driven real change, and my colleagues and I remain committed to ensuring that we all do our part to find solutions to the challenges faced by people struggling with these issues. Together, we're working hard to break down silos and streamline services across transition points as people move between the health care system, children and youth services, the education system, housing and the justice system.

To achieve these priorities, our government is working with our partners across all sectors, across all levels of government and across all our communities. Going forward in 2014, our government will undertake the second phase of Open Minds, Healthy Minds by expanding the focus of our strategy to include youth and adult addictions as well as adult mental health, building on the work that is already under way across government.

Recently, we've taken action to help address a particular type of addiction that has become acute in many communities across our province, and that is narcotic addiction. In 2010, our government introduced our Narcotics Strategy. It is saving lives and it is protecting individuals and families from the harmful effects of the misuse and abuse of prescription narcotics. Since November 2011, Ontarians are now required to show

identification to their doctor, dentist and, in other cases, their pharmacist in order to receive a prescription narcotic or other controlled drug. As of May 2012, pharmacies have been collecting and submitting this information electronically through the narcotics monitoring system, so that the province can securely monitor the prescribing and dispensing of narcotics and other controlled drugs to Ontarians.

In March 2012, I convened the Expert Working Group on Narcotic Addiction to provide short-, medium- and long-term advice for strengthening Ontario's addiction treatment system, with a focus on prescription narcotic misuse and addiction. Based on the group's advice, last October I was pleased to announce \$15 million in new funding to strengthen supports for people addicted to opioids, because whether due to chronic pain, mental illness or other reasons, many people need help to overcome those addictions.

Of that \$15-million investment, \$12 million is going toward opioid treatment programs and addiction treatment programs specifically designed for pregnant or parenting women, \$2 million is being used to support aboriginal and First Nation initiatives, and \$1 million is going towards expanding Ontario's monitoring system through hospital ERs and public health units, and to support outreach and education efforts toward high-risk communities.

Another addiction that has taken a significant toll on many Ontarians is tobacco use. I'd like to mention that National Addictions Awareness Week coincides with World Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, or COPD, Day, which takes place today, November 20. Through our efforts to reduce tobacco use, protect people from the harm of second-hand smoke, help smokers quit and prevent youth from smoking, all part of our Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy, we are acting to reduce both addictions and chronic lung disease. That's in addition to other serious health consequences of smoking, of course: cancer and heart disease.

Earlier this week, I was pleased to introduce the Youth Smoking Prevention Act, which proposes further action to reduce kids' access to tobacco and to protect the people of Ontario from exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke. Among other provisions, our proposed amendments would, if passed, double the maximum fines for those who sell tobacco to youth, prohibit smoking on and around playgrounds and sports fields, and prohibit smoking on bar and restaurant patios.

My deepest gratitude goes to the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco, the Ontario Medical Association, the Ontario Lung Association and so many others for their support of this legislation. As well, my thanks go to Canada's research-based pharmaceutical companies for working with us on ways to improve care for people with COPD.

As we mark National Addictions Awareness Week and World COPD Day, let us thank all of the dedicated health care professionals, the community mental health

and addictions agencies and our corporate partners for doing their part to help those with addictions issues or with chronic lung diseases and their families.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm very pleased to rise in response to the minister's statement on National Addictions Awareness Week, on behalf of the PC caucus.

November 18 to 24 marks National Addictions Awareness Week. This week plays a critical role in highlighting issues around alcohol- and drug-related addictions, as well as reducing stigma and creating a national conversation. Conversations such as the one we're having today help to form national solutions to an ongoing national problem.

Organizations such as the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse continue to advocate for those suffering from addictions and raise awareness, as well as create programs and services for those who most need them. The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse has made youth drug prevention this year's awareness week theme. The organization posed a question, asking, "How do we prevent our young people from developing substance abuse issues?" It's important in Ontario to work on answering this question and ensuring that we have the right models in place to educate young people on the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse.

1530

I'd just like to comment briefly on one of the initiatives of this Legislature, which started working on this important issue several years ago. Beginning in February 2009, I, as well as a number of members of the Legislature, had the privilege to serve on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, which, of course, represented all three parties. One of the things I learned very early on in the work we did on the committee was the degree to which mental health and addictions issues are related. Until that time, I had tended to think of addictions as a stand-alone issue, but I came to understand very early on how intertwined they are, and you can't really deal with one issue without dealing with the other.

This served to be extremely helpful to me in the work we did on the committee, because we had many people come to see us to say they had underlying mental health issues, which they came to realize later on they had tried to mask by using alcohol or other drugs, both prescription and non-prescription. I think this informed the work all of us did as members of the committee, and together, we wrote 23 recommendations that formed the basis of our report and helped to inform, I believe, the minister, along with other groups she spoke to about developing the 10-year strategy on mental health and addictions for the province.

So, to the government's credit, I would say thank you very much for taking this seriously and creating the 10-year strategy. Some good work has been done, but I would say there's a lot of work that still remains to be done. We need, first of all, more treatment options and facilities to offer treatment. Too often we have young

people with addictions problems who can't sit on a waiting list for treatment for two years. They're going to the United States and other places for treatment. I would say we have some great treatment facilities here in Ontario. If we build the capacity, we can treat more and more young people and get them on a path to healthy living.

There are still people having problems accessing housing, particularly if they have a mental health and addictions issue. There is some great work that's being done by the Mental Health Commission of Canada—I know that Ontario has played a part in that—in placing people in stable housing and then working on their mental health and addictions issues. This program shows great promise in getting people off the street and into safe and secure housing, so I think there are some of those options that we could be pursuing, as well.

There are a lot of issues around justice that I think need to be dealt with. Too often, people with mental health and addiction problems are being caught up in our criminal justice system, when in some cases they could be diverted. But even for those people who can't be diverted into other programs, there are some drug and mental health courts that exist in various parts of the province that it would be great to see expanded across the province.

We have heard of significant mental health and addictions issues in our correctional facilities. Some people say that up to 40% to 50% of all the inmates in our correctional facilities have mental health and/or addictions problems.

We still have a big problem with prescription drug abuse, and I recognize that there has been some work done. But particularly in our First Nations communities, there are significant issues with prescription drug abuse that are tearing apart the communities, and we really need to offer people in our First Nations communities greater support and assistance.

So there are lots of other things that I think we could be doing, and I would urge the Minister of Health and the ministers of the other responsible ministries to continue to work on this very important issue, because it is an issue across all of our ridings. I don't think there's any member in this House who hasn't heard about this in their riding.

In closing, I would like to thank the dedicated health professionals and the people who are involved in community mental health and addictions facilities for the important work they do in our communities each and every day.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to talk about Addictions Awareness Week. For many people who are experiencing addiction, it is a very, very personal issue that is shared with their families and close friends. It is never on the front page of the paper unless for the wrong reason; it is hidden.

People living with addictions come from all walks of life. There are no stereotypes, and it is very difficult to spot who are the people who need help. It could be your

neighbour, it could be the person who works at the gas station, the teenager who babysits your children, or it could be your family physician. Addictions Awareness Week is an opportunity to educate yourself and ourselves so that we can do better and we can reach out.

Unfortunately, in Ontario, our strategy for addictions is sorely lacking. I, like the previous member, was a member of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. We produced a report entitled *Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians*. The report was the culmination of 18 months of work, 30 days of hearings, 230 presenters and 300 submissions. The report contains a short 23 recommendations. Unfortunately, of all of those, I would say one and a half have been acted upon.

That one was recommendation 11, which asked the ministry to address the addiction to prescription painkillers, and this is what we saw with Bill 101, the Narcotics Safety and Awareness Act. Unfortunately, this was poorly done. It was sort of rushed out without really talking to the people and the stakeholders, and it left many people facing more gaps trying to access services. Because even if we make the substance, such as Oxy-Contin, not available anymore, your need for a chronic pain management strategy does not go away. The pain does not go away because you don't have access to medication anymore. You're just facing more loopholes. You're just facing more barriers.

A chronic pain strategy is sorely needed. It would help us figure out how come so many people get addicted to narcotics, to painkillers. If we had other options to offer them, if we had interdisciplinary care available to help them manage their pain to a point where they did not need all of that medication anymore, we would do a world of good. But none of this is happening.

Today, three years after the select committee tabled its report, we've seen some improvement in children's mental health funding and for the very early stages of adult mental health—but basically we're still a long way from word to action.

The committee has done a great deal of work to highlight the disconnect. Our number one priority was to create a mental health and addictions agency and to give all those different—and there are hundreds of them—agencies in Ontario that provide mental health and addiction support a home. Let's give them a place where we can start to have a basket of services that is accessible to all, no matter where you live, no matter your language, no matter the circumstances of your life. But we still are a long way from that. We still haven't got such an agency.

Youth still don't have programs tailored to their needs, and instead, they are caught between children's mental health programs and adults' mental health programs, often aging out of the children's mental health program, on a wait-list, before they can be put on the wait-list of the adult mental health program, without ever receiving an hour of care. We all know that this is especially prob-

lematic because most serious mental illnesses are diagnosed between the ages of 15 and 24, right as those young people transition.

The rate of narcotic addiction in First Nations is sometimes a real burden on those communities, and most of them do not have access to support at all.

What is most puzzling is the discrimination that the people with addictions face, no matter where they go. In society in general, and especially in some of our emergency rooms in hospitals, health care professionals still discriminate against them.

PETITIONS

CARLETON PLACE AND DISTRICT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Carleton Place and District Memorial Hospital (CPDMH) received approval in 2007 to plan for redevelopment of a new hospital;

"Whereas Carleton Place and the area surrounding it is a rapidly growing community on a recently expanded Highway 7;

"Whereas CPDMH serves a catchment area of approximately 29,000 people. The building is a 58-year-old facility with many unresolvable deficiencies that make it no longer adequate to efficiently provide an ever-changing and expanding array of quality health services for our growing population;

"Whereas CPDMH is working collaboratively with other health and social service agencies in the area to establish a one-stop health care village, supporting the integration goals of the Champlain LHIN and to better serve the local community;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"CPDMH needs approval now to proceed to the next stage of the MOHLTC capital planning process to make a new hospital a reality for our growing region."

I agree with it and will—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

1540

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Enbridge Canada is proposing to reverse the flow of the Line 9 pipeline in order to transport western oil and tar sands oil through the most densely populated parts of Ontario;

"Whereas this pipeline project proposes changes to the pipeline that merit serious consideration, like the increase in oil carrying capacity and the transport of significantly more corrosive oil through the pipeline;

"Whereas this pipeline passes under cities and major rivers and a spill would risk the drinking water and health of millions of Ontarians and cause permanent damage to ecosystems;

"Whereas Line 9's reversal will have impacts that must be analyzed beyond the National Energy Board hearings held by the federal government;

"Whereas the government of Quebec has already indicated its intention to conduct an independent review of the line reversal impact, including the flow of oil sands crude into Quebec;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario acts in the best interest of the health and environment of the province and conduct a full environmental assessment of Enbridge's proposed Line 9 reversal and capacity expansion projects."

I fully concur with this petition and will be giving it to page Jonathan.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have a petition here that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health implemented major changes to the provision of OHIP physiotherapy services as of August 1st; and

"Whereas this will drastically reduce the number of allowable treatments to 12 per year for people who are currently eligible for 100 treatments annually; and

"Whereas funding for physiotherapy services to seniors in long-term-care homes will be cut by almost 50%; and

"Whereas ambulatory seniors in retirement homes would have to travel offsite for physiotherapy; and

"Whereas under the changes of August 1, the cost of visits under the CCAC model will rise to \$120 per visit, rather than the current fee of \$12.20 under OHIP;

"Whereas these changes will deprive seniors and other eligible clients from the many health and mobility benefits of physiotherapy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the delisting of OHIP physiotherapy clinics and services be reversed."

I agree with this petition and I'll affix my name to it.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas small businesses not only employ thousands of Ontarians with well-paying jobs, they also play a vital role strengthening Ontario's economy; and

"Whereas providing tax relief to small and local businesses strengthens the economy and creates a

business climate that attracts investment and helps create jobs; and

"Whereas the government has taken several other initiatives to making Ontario the most attractive place to do business in North America;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 105, Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013, introduced on September 24, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Finance."

I fully support the petition and will give it to page Yong.

SHARKS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here that was given to me by Nigel Finch from Thamesford. He got hundreds of signatures from a lot of residents in Oxford county. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas each year 100 million sharks are slaughtered due to the demand of shark fin soup and although the actual activity of finning a shark is illegal in Canada, the selling of the soup is not. In fact, 50 tonnes of shark fin is imported each year into this country and out of 30 cities that sell shark fin soup 20 of them are in Ontario. Sharks are important for the survival of the ocean ecosystem and the earth in general. The extinction of sharks would have an extremely negative outcome on the human species and the earth. In just under a century the shark population has decreased by 90%.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislature pass a law prohibiting the importation, selling, creating, and/or purchasing of shark fin soup in the province of Ontario."

I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to present this petition, and I thank Nigel Finch for collecting those signatures.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Ms. Cindy Forster: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved a new funding formula within a fixed funding envelope for children's aid societies which are mandated by legislation to provide child protection services;

"Whereas this new 'fairer' funding model has resulted in a \$50.6-million funding shortfall for agencies across Ontario for 2013-14 and due to inadequate funding and the introduction of 'accountability measures' which prevent agencies from running deficits, agencies will be forced to balance budgets by cutting staff and services;

"Whereas the \$2.3-million provincial funding shortfall for Family and Children's Services Niagara for 2013 alone has led to the recent announcement of the closure of the Regional Adolescent Centre, a youth home and treatment centre for youth who need supports to stabilize

their situation to help them make successful transition back to the community, a foster family, their family of origin or independent living;

"Whereas the closure of the Regional Adolescent Centre will force a situation in which there will be fewer beds for kids in need of specialized supports in the community, foster parents will not have access to the RAC for respite care, kids in treatment currently may be required to go out of the community to receive supports and over 40 workers will lose their jobs;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government fund the \$50.6-million funding shortfall, fix the funding formula to ensure that agencies can maintain services including prevention services and put an immediate halt to the closure of the Regional Adolescent Centre in Welland and other staffing cuts that hurt services."

I support this petition, affix my signature and send it with page Maya.

LEGAL AID

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition on population-based legal services funding, addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. One of the signatories is a constituent of ours, Harjinder Chahal of Forest Hill Drive. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas Mississauga Community Legal Services provides free legal services to legal aid clients within a community of nearly 800,000 population; and

"Whereas legal services in communities like Toronto and Hamilton serve, per capita, fewer people living in poverty, are better staffed and better funded; and

"Whereas Mississauga and Brampton have made progress in having Ontario provide funding for human services on a fair and equitable, population-based model;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of the Attorney General revise the current distribution of allocated funds in the 2012-13 budget, and adopt a population-based model, factoring in population growth rates to ensure Ontario funds are allocated in an efficient, fair and effective manner."

Speaker, I am pleased to sign this petition and to send it down with page Arvind.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr. Todd Smith: This comes to me from the Health Sciences North Volunteer Association, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario, through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, levies the Ontario provincial fee on the sale of break-open tickets by charitable and non-profit organizations in the province; and

"Whereas local hospital auxiliaries/associations across the province, who are members of the Hospital Auxiliaries

Association of Ontario, use break-open tickets to raise funds to support local health care equipment needs in more than 100 communities across the province; and

"Whereas in September 2010, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario announced a series of changes to the Ontario provincial fee which included a reduction of the fee for certain organizations and the complete elimination of the fee for other organizations, depending on where the break-open tickets are sold; and

"Whereas the September 2010 changes to the Ontario provincial fee unfairly treat certain charitable and non-profit organizations (local hospital auxiliaries) by not providing for the complete elimination of the fee which would otherwise be used by these organizations to increase their support for local health care equipment needs and other community needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to eliminate the Ontario provincial fee on break-open tickets for all charitable and non-profit organizations in Ontario and allow all organizations using this fundraising tool to invest more funds in local community projects, including local health care equipment needs, for the benefit of Ontarians."

I agree with this and will send it to the table with page Amy.

ONTARIO RANGER PROGRAM

Mr. Michael Mantha: This is a petition presented to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, draw attention to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

1550

"The Ontario Ranger Program takes youth out of their comfort zones by taking youth from the south and placing them in northern camps and vice versa, allowing for personal growth;

"The Ontario Ranger Program also helps nearby rural communities as the Ontario Rangers help with various work projects and build partnerships within the communities; the work is recognized and appreciated by these small communities;

"An extensive amount of work maintaining the interior routes in major provincial parks such as Quetico, Algonquin and Temagami is completed by Ontario Rangers on multi-day overnight canoe trips ...;

"The lifelong skills and friendships built during the Ontario Ranger Program help youth develop into mature, confident, independent individuals, which is well worth the money spent on the program;

"Low-income and high-risk youth sent to rangers are isolated from their home situation and are exposed to the positive team-building environment within the Ontario Ranger Program;

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demonstrate that the Ontario Ranger Program is a valuable program to the youth of Ontario, reverse the decision to close the Ontario Ranger

Program and continue to help youth make a difference in Ontario.”

I agree with this petition and will present it to page Zachary to bring down to the Clerks.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Mr. Phil McNeely: “Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

“Whereas MPP Bas Balkissoon’s private member’s bill, the Manoranjana Kanagasabapathy Act, 2013, received all-party support on October 31st, 2013; and

“Whereas Bill 116 was named in memory of a 52-year-old grandmother who was killed by a truck as she boarded a Toronto bus; and

“Whereas the accident rate of drivers who drive while using hand-held devices are at a rate comparable to drunk driving; and

“Whereas penalties for infractions of section 78 of the Highway Traffic Act are too lenient;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That members of the Legislative Assembly work together to pass Bill 116, the Manoranjana Kanagasabapathy Act (Hand-Held Devices Penalty), 2013, that would increase fines for distracted driving while using a hand-held device from \$300 to \$700, in addition to the loss of three demerit points for those in contravention of the law.”

I agree with this petition. I send it forward with Marina.

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr. John O’Toole: I present a petition from my riding of Durham, which is home to the large nuclear plant.

“Whereas the economic benefit of the retained nuclear scenario is \$60 billion. Eliminating the wind options in the long-term energy plan (LTEP) will have a positive economic benefit of \$21 billion. Forgoing the nuclear option in the” long-term energy plan “will have an economic loss of \$38 billion;

“Whereas the Durham region economy is based on the new build” of nuclear. “It was Premier Wynne who cancelled the new build at Darlington, costing Ontario 20,000 direct and indirect jobs associated with the new build;

“Whereas this severely limits employment opportunities for university graduates from the University of Ontario Institute of Technology” and others “who were to gain experience in Darlington nuclear’s training centre;

“Whereas in addition to refurbishing the four existing reactors at Darlington the building of new capacity is important for the future of Ontario’s manufacturing sector and for jobs and investment” across “Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That Ontario’s ... MPPs and the provincial government reaffirm their commitment to the complete refurbishment of all four units at the Darlington generating station and that the Ontario government reinstate the original plan for the completion of the two new reactors at the Darlington generating station.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this and present it to Niam, one of the pages.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

“Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

“Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

“Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

“That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route.”

I join my name with thousands and give it to Jonathan to be delivered to the table.

OPPOSITION DAY

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Liberal government has failed to consult affected communities and the horse racing sector in its plans for OLG modernization; and

That the OLG plan to expand private casinos into urban centres where they’re not wanted is misguided; and

That both the Liberal and Tory plans for more private casinos in Ontario have resulted in the cancellation of the Slots at Racetracks Program (SARP); and

That the cancellation of the SARP has negatively affected not-for-profit racetracks like Fort Erie.

Therefore, the Legislative Assembly calls on the government to reinstate and maintain the SARP program unless and until a new revenue-sharing program is developed in consultation with affected communities, industry and stakeholders; and

That all existing and future racetrack audits are published to ensure that funds are dispersed to the horse racing industry in a fair and transparent process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 3. Ms. Horwath.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Mr. Speaker, as the motion clearly states, this is a discussion about the fact that the Liberals have gone ahead with a plan that has pretty much killed what was once a very robust horse racing industry in the province of Ontario. The Premier's OLG modernization plan is hurting horse racing families across rural Ontario. You simply need to visit rural Ontario to find out that that is exactly the case.

The motion, therefore, is a way to save the jobs of thousands of track workers and horse people, jockeys and trainers, concession workers and kitchen staff, stable workers and groomers, maintenance personnel and security, mutual desk operators and the suppliers who drive Ontario's rural economic engine.

I'm proud to welcome Brian Tropea, who is the general manager, and Ken Hardy, who is a director, of the harness racing association here in Ontario. Welcome.

Actually, what I want to do in my initial remarks is encourage all members, regardless of your political stripe, who care about the future of horse racing in Ontario, to support this motion.

It's easy to bet when you're playing with someone else's stakes, and the Liberals are set to gamble away the horse racing industry in rural Ontario on a long shot. I say that because it's really clear: The government cancelled the Slots at Racetracks Program without so much as talking to horse people and track workers whose livelihoods depend on this program, and now we're seeing the fallout. We're seeing the fallout as families are faced with agonizing decisions, like whether to feed their horses or pay the mortgages on their farms. That is an untenable position to put people in, Speaker.

Last month, you may recall, horse people from Fort Erie came to Queen's Park to plead for their livelihood. We heard from 12-year-old Kayla Alderson, whose family has been ripped apart by the Liberal decision to scrap the SARP program. Not only did Kayla's family lose their farm, but her father, Tony, has to leave for the US to find work as a horse trainer. Her older brother, who used to be a jockey at Fort Erie, now has to leave behind his home and family to continue racing for a living across the border in the US.

Now, I can tell you that the horse people I have spoken to aren't satisfied with this government's excuses. They'd rather have their SARP program back than the patchwork mess that the Liberals have thrown in to replace it.

Nobody in the industry disputes that the SARP program should be improved—should have been improved—and made more transparent. In fact, that's something New Democrats have said all along as well. But this government, instead of improving a program that needed to have some minor adjustments made to it, decided to throw out the baby with the bathwater rather than come to the table with the stakeholders and find a

solution that worked for everybody, not just the big winners the government chose in their process.

After blowing over \$1 billion of public money on moving gas plants around the GTA and then doing their best to cover up the scandal, this government has no right to ride a high horse about accountability, which is the excuse they use time and time again about the devastation they've caused in the horse racing industry. In fact, if it wasn't for the diligence of New Democrats—the team that sits around me right now—this Legislature wouldn't even have known about her government's disturbing process of deleting emails, for example, and the public wouldn't be getting an independent Financial Accountability Office, which will stop the spending scandals of the Liberals before they happen in the future.

New Democrats, in fact, fight every day in this chamber for better accountability, more accountability, and we won't stop fighting for an accountable SARP program that actually works for rural Ontario. It's time that Ms. Wynne came clean about the real reason that she decided to scrap the Slots at Racetracks Program in the first place.

1600

Since the Liberals charged ahead with their plan to expand private casinos across Ontario and effectively shut down horse racing in many rural communities, the government has insisted that this is a bet that was going to pay off. As time has passed, it's become clearer and clearer and clearer that there aren't many winners in this game, and a lot of people are losing at this game.

Instead of finding willing hosts for mega casinos, municipalities are lining up to say, "No thanks." Instead of the windfall the government promised for provincial coffers, revenue isn't growing. In fact, it's going in the opposite direction. Meanwhile, horse people and track workers are losing their animals, their farms and their livelihoods.

Instead of upholding a 116-year racing tradition in Niagara at the Fort Erie track, the government is cutting—getting rid of—the not-for-profit Fort Erie Race Track. That's a problem for a whole lot of people down in that part of the province.

Instead of working with tracks to make the Slots at Racetracks Program more accountable, they're hiding behind one of their many advisory panels. Instead of making the provincial audits of race track operations public, the government is keeping the lid on the sky-high salaries that Woodbine executives paid themselves with SARP money that was meant for horses. Instead of rewarding the Fort Erie Race Track and other not-for-profit tracks for being open with their books, the government is putting them out to pasture.

The Premier insists that putting horse people out of work is the only way to make horse racing sustainable. How much sense does that make to you, Speaker? Any agriculture minister worth her salt would know that you don't help rural Ontario by hurting the people who make their living there.

When New Democrats stand up in the Legislature and defend horse racing jobs in Fort Erie, Sudbury, Sarnia, Windsor and communities across the province, this Premier accuses us of making political hay. It's one thing to do photo ops with their friends; it's another to go to the communities that are directly affected by the SARP cancellation. It makes for quite a different picture, Speaker, and if she won't take it from me, she should at least take it straight from the horse's mouth.

The Premier should listen to horse people instead of the casino executives who are whispering promises of riches in her ear only if she eliminates competition outside of urban centres. That's the real reason that the government scrapped the SARP program. She certainly didn't do it to make horse racing sustainable. She certainly didn't do it to give horse racing a future in communities like Fort Erie.

A lot of damage has already been done, but it's not too late to save the horse racing industry in this province. It's not too late to bring back a revamped, transparent and accountable—fully accountable—SARP program. It's not too late to do the right thing. I'm calling on members from all political parties to save thousands of jobs in rural Ontario and to vote for this motion, because this motion is what will actually turn around the wrong direction that the province is now headed in when it comes to the horse racing industry in this province.

As I said earlier in my remarks, all the Premier needs to do is go to places like Flamborough, talk to people like Jim Whelan; go to places like Fort Erie, talk to people like Jim Thibert; go to places like Chelmsford and talk to the folks there, the MacIsaacs. There, they would learn exactly what needs to be done to save the horse racing industry in Ontario, to actually make it a thriving industry once again. It can be done, Speaker. It can be done if the members in this Legislature right now have the will to actually do it, instead of looking at the gold that's being promised by big, private casinos. Shame on the Liberals for burying rural Ontario, for writing off that fantastic industry that we've built over decades in this province and handing it over to some private casinos with promises of riches. Shame on them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Grant Crack: I'm pleased to rise today to speak about the future of the horse racing industry in Ontario. The opposition in their motion are advocating a return to the Slots at Racetracks Program, or SARP, which, as we know, was bad public policy.

On this side of the House, we know how important the horse racing and breeding industries are to communities across the province, and we believe that a successful and sustainable horse racing industry continues to have an important role to play in the economic and social life of this province.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nepean–Carleton is a little boisterous. Cut it back a bit, please. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Speaker.

However, the government's ongoing support of the horse racing industry must be based on accountability, transparency and providing a positive return on investment for the industry and for the taxpayers. SARP was not accountable and it was not transparent.

The Sadinsky report, Don Drummond and the tripartisan horse racing panel all concluded that SARP was poor public policy and needed to be changed. That's why we've moved ahead with a five-year partnership plan with the industry that includes integration into the OLG's modernization strategy. This partnership will ensure a positive return to taxpayers for their investment in the horse racing industry.

Let's look at the goal of the opposition's motion for a moment. The old Slots at Racetrack Program focused the horse racing industry on slot machines instead of racing fans. The transition panel's initial report last year clearly stated that linking the industry with the slots revenue meant that the industry was not invested in its own growth. Apparently this was not clear enough for the opposition.

Our Horse Racing Partnership Plan is designed to provide stability for the industry, allowing it to grow by focusing on the core customer: the horse player and racing fan. As it reintegrates racing into the Ontario gaming strategy, it will provide new opportunities for the horse racing industry.

Our Horse Racing Partnership Plan includes a new business development division for Ontario horse racing to help the industry build on its fan base, improve opportunities for Ontario horses and encourage new horse owners.

Our commitment to partnership includes encouraging leadership from within the horse racing industry. We have a positive plan. It's in place to move forward in partnership with the industry, and I look forward to working with them towards a successful future.

Let's also talk about the financial review of the tracks. Tracks that wanted to participate in our government's transition funding last year were required to open their books for a third-party audit firm to undertake a financial due diligence review.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): If the members want to have a little heated discussion, they can take it outside. I'm trying to listen to the speaker.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: We're just trying to strategize.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I don't want any double-talk. If you have a problem, go outside with it.

Go ahead.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you again, Speaker.

The opposition is aware, because the Premier has told them in this House more than once, that the findings of the due diligence reviews cannot be made public due to the commercially sensitive information provided and the third-party aspect of this work, so let's move forward.

I'm proud to work for a Premier who has delivered on her commitment to create a sustainable future for the Ontario horse racing industry. We have a comprehensive action plan that builds a solid foundation and a new partnership with the horse racing industry.

The Horse Racing Partnership Plan integrates the horse racing industry into the province's gaming strategy and encourages the industry to grow wagering revenues, and its fan base, by creating and offering products customers want. This plan is the result of hundreds of hours of consultation by the Horse Racing Industry Transition Panel with more than 1,000 industry representatives.

These conversations were substantive and direct on both sides. The panel heard loud and clear that the industry needs stability, that ad hoc measures won't do, and that industry participants need a solid, long-term plan and funding model in order to continue to invest in the industry.

That is what the Horse Racing Partnership Plan delivers: an economically sound, commercially viable model of world-class standardbred, thoroughbred and quarter horse racing for Ontario. It will also be accountable and transparent, and provide a positive return on investment of public funds.

We're moving forward with that plan. We want to build on the great traditions of horse racing in this province and attract a new generation of fans to the sport. That's why the Ontario government is making a five-year, \$400-million commitment to stabilize the industry and provide an environment that supports opportunities for growth. In addition, 100% of wagering revenues will flow back to the horse racing industry.

1610

We will strengthen the industry development function of the Ontario Racing Commission. We'll create a pathway to integration with the OLG modernization and assist the industry with business development and innovation.

Funding will support live racing, including racetrack operations and purses, as well as industry-wide initiatives such as the Horse Improvement Program, responsible gaming and marketing/branding.

The Horse Racing Partnership Plan will strengthen and promote live racing in Ontario. The Horse Racing Partnership Plan will provide all three sectors of the industry—racetrack operators, owners and breeders—with the potential to be profitable. Rural and northern communities will continue to see significant economic benefits from both live racing and the industries that support horse racing, including breeding, training, veterinarians and more.

Our government's partnership plan is better than SARP or any proposal to relink the future of horse racing to a percentage of slot revenues. It will be a model for public support for racing across North America. The industry wants to move forward. Political rhetoric and empty promises for partisan gain do not help anyone.

The future of the industry—and this is true across all of North America—is in building a new fan base to

support the sport. Our plan provides the appropriate public support to maintain a foundation for racing, but more importantly, it provides opportunities for growth. Our plan has received support from the industry. Confidence is already returning to the industry, as evidenced by the recent yearling sales at Forest City, where prices were up an average of \$3,000.

Now is not the time to go backwards. The horse racing industry has a new path forward; it doesn't need political posturing and empty promises made in advance of a by-election campaign.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm certainly pleased to rise and speak to this motion. I've been listening with interest to the previous two speakers, and there are a couple of facts I'd like to present today.

The Liberals cancelled the SARP program—that's a fact. We all know that. But the NDP allowed the budget to pass by not voting against the budget—that's a fact. They should have stood up for the horse racing industry back in 2012, but they refused to do that.

I am honoured to serve as the official opposition critic for rural affairs and the horse racing industry. Since becoming critic, I have spoken with many stakeholders from across Ontario. I have listened to the Premier's announcement in Wellington county at the Grand River Raceway. Nobody was smiling. In fact, that was where she admitted that her government had made a mistake.

I then joined our leader, Tim Hudak, to unveil our five-point plan, a bold plan to turn around the industry. Our plan is very clear. We'll put an immediate and permanent end to the Liberals' so-called modernization plan. We will re-establish but fix a Slots at Racetracks Program that will be transparent, accountable and affordable to the taxpayer. We will form public-private partnerships with businesses that know how to run slots to increase overall revenue that can be shared with the horse racing industry and taxpayers. We will build on what is already working. New gaming operations like table games and sports betting should go to racetracks as opposed to building 29 new casinos. We also will enforce strong accountability and transparency mechanisms around how the revenue is used, as recommended in the Sadinsky report.

Our party is the party that created SARP—another fact. SARP wasn't perfect, but it contributed to the success of an industry and was seen as a model across North America. It's certainly interesting that the NDP is supporting what was a Conservative policy.

Again, we need to build on what was working, a revenue-sharing program and a version of SARP. That is why the official opposition will be supporting this motion.

Many times, both inside and outside of this Legislature, we've held the government to account for decimating the industry in its 2012 budget. We in the official opposition have done so consistently. We voted against the budget. We believe we're the only party that has consistently supported the industry at every turn. Our

white paper Respect for Rural Ontario was introduced about a year and a half ago when we first addressed the horse racing industry.

This motion represents a change in heart on the part of the NDP. They refused to vote against the budget that destroyed SARP. The NDP motion represents a worthy goal, to re-establish revenue sharing, and that's why we support it, but it is not a plan.

It is worthwhile, going back to 2012, to see what the NDP got in exchange for not defeating the Liberal government. Dalton McGuinty was quoted as saying of his relationship with the NDP, "We have found a happy marriage." The leader of the third party did a deal with Mr. McGuinty behind closed doors. The NDP demanded, and got, even higher taxes and a 1% increase to some social programs. That's about it. In exchange for higher taxes and higher spending on their pet projects, and in exchange for holding on to their seats for a little while longer, the NDP sold the horse racing industry down the river. The NDP sacrificed 9,000 jobs. They sacrificed 3,000 horse owners, who have left the industry entirely.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I can see the member from Kitchener—Waterloo, even though she's blocked out by the other member.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm right here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I can hear you.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I can hear you too.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Continue.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: They sacrificed nearly \$850 million in investment according to the industry's own research. They sacrificed the interests and economic future of rural and small town Ontario. That was a bad deal for Ontario and a terrible loss for the horse racing industry.

Again, we're supporting the motion because we know the industry needs to see some action from this government, whose own plan will not work. We know we need to re-establish a new, accountable and transparent version of Slots at Racetracks. But this motion is just more evidence that the NDP is trying to do everything it can to deflect their own responsibility for the lost jobs, lost investment and lost opportunity caused by the 2012 budget. The Liberal-NDP happy marriage has proven anything but happy for horse racing in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon. Speaker, I'd like to take you on a short journey this afternoon to St. Lad's Farm. Now, picture this: You're in the heart of Essex county, but when you travel down to 1078 Countryview Lane in Ruscom, Ontario, you could have been transported to horse country in Kentucky.

My friends Bob and Veronica Ladouceur have owned and operated St. Lad's Farm for the past 25 years. They're horse breeders. Over the years, some of their

offspring have gone on to earn big money as pacers and trotters.

St. Lad's Turbo has earned more than half a million dollars; St. Lad's Popcorn—even better—\$655,000 for its owners. That's a lot of money. Because of their skills as breeders, the Ladouceurs have bred 29 horses that have earned more than \$100,000 for their various owners. They call these 29 the Six Digit Club. I mention this as a way of saying Bob and Veronica know their business and they do it very well.

They used to breed 50 to 60 mares a year, and they would welcome into this world anywhere from 40 to 50 babies each and every year. Because of the cancellation of the Slots at Racetracks Program, and the devastation that this has caused throughout Ontario's racing industry, this season St. Lad's has bred only 18 mares, not 60, and will only be giving birth to 14 babies, not 50. You know what? They used to be able to take a few people off the welfare rolls, give them jobs, give them training and set them off on a new career. They can't do that anymore.

1620

They used to own 32 broodmares of their own. Now they have eight. They used to bring in another 40 broodmares. Now they bring in 10. They used to have clients from Michigan, Ohio and New York, and bring in nearly 20 horses from the United States. Now they don't have any. That's a loss of \$100,000 to our economy in Ontario. Why? Because the Liberal government, without rhyme or reason, cancelled the Slots at Racetracks Program.

The silly—no, let's make that stupid—idea of getting out of the slots program at racetracks has cost this province big time. In my area alone, 2,000 people lost their jobs when the slots closed at Windsor Raceway and the track shut down. That was a loss of \$8 million a year in gaming profits—not tax money; a loss to the province of \$8 million a year in gaming profits—let alone 2,000 jobs lost.

Bob and Veronica do such great work. They have, over the years, sold some of their babies for \$30,000, some for \$45,000 and even some for \$65,000. They know their business; they love their business. You know how they survive now, what keeps them afloat, what pays their bills this time of year? It's not the breeding business; that's for damned sure. They sell their hay and straw to other farmers. They don't need as much hay and straw anymore, because they don't have as many horses to look after.

Speaker, you probably know this, but a bale of hay runs between \$4 and \$6—\$6.50 for the really good stuff. You know what? With supply and demand, they might even get 10 bucks a bale, come March. Straw is a different story. They can still sell straw for two bucks a bale.

The saddest part in all of this—what this government refuses to acknowledge, and I hope my Liberal friends are listening—is that there are horse owners who say to the breeders, not just at St. Lad's Farm but to all the breeders, "After you wean the baby off the mare, I'll give you two or three months. That's all I'm going to pay you

for. I'll give you a couple of months. If you don't find a new home for the mare, I want you to ship her out to the auction."

Now, you know what that means, Speaker: the Ontario Livestock Exchange—good people, I'm sure. This is the place where you bid on a horse by the pound. That's right: 29 cents a pound, 30 cents a pound, maybe 31 on a good day. Horses that used to be worth a ton of money are now being sold in this province by the pound. Imagine: A once-proud industry, an industry that made money for this government, is reduced to selling its product for horsemeat for the European market or for dog food.

I say, "Shame." Shame on this government for what it has done to the racing industry in this province. Shame on this government for devastating the lives of so many people. Shame on this government for what is happening to the thousands of horses in this province. Shame on you for making decisions without thinking them through, without considering what you were doing to so many proud families.

St. Lad's Farm: one example of a small business, family-owned and -operated—giving birth to horses who have earned more than \$9 million for their many, many owners in Ontario, in Canada and in the United States. And now these proud owners are hanging on by their very fingertips. There will be no profit at St. Lad's Farm this year. There was no profit at St. Lad's Farm last year.

Until this government admits it made a mistake—by the way, there is no shame in admitting that you made a mistake. Until this government admits that it made a mistake and reverses this decision in closing the Slots at Racetracks Program and starts over, there very well may never be another profit made at St. Lad's Farm.

I invite you—don't take my word for it—to pay them a visit at 1078 Countryview Lane, Ruscom, Ontario—Bob and Veronica Ladouceur. Tell them Percy sent you. They'll treat you right. They'll show you around; they'll open their books; they'll show you their operation. They live and breathe their business. Speaker, they helped this industry grow and prosper. They brought bragging rights to the horse-breeding business in Ontario, and what do they get in return? A kick in the teeth from this government, just like practically everyone else in small-town Ontario who had anything to do with the horse racing business. I'll say it again: Shame on this government. Shame, shame, shame.

Bob and Veronica Ladouceur are two of the hardest-working people you'll ever meet, and just two of the 9,000 people in this province who are paying the price for a decision made by this government that cannot be justified, cannot be defended with any integrity whatsoever.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you to the member from Windsor—Tecumseh.

Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I have addressed this chamber on many occasions, starting back to when I was first elected to this place in 2006, with respect to the Slots at Race-

tracks Program and, in particular, the Rideau Carleton Raceway, which is in the heart of my riding and is a major employer, particularly for our rural community, in the city of Ottawa. Over 1,000 people rely on the viability of that racetrack, many of whom, yes, are horsemen and horsewomen who are trainers and jockeys. Many others are farmers who rely on supplementing their income on the farm by selling hay. Several others actually make feed, particularly in my colleague from—what's your riding?—

Mr. Jim McDonell: Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, as well as big animal veterinarians from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

I get quite emotional on this issue, Speaker, because I know the people who work at that track. I regularly visit them to see how they're doing, and I regularly attend the Rideau Carleton Raceway for a number of community-oriented events, whether that is the Gloucester Fair or the Barrhaven Night at the Races. Even this summer, Speaker, my daughter was in training. She was in a camp for horse racing this summer and did her first race with a horse, and I was quite proud of that.

I have great friends who work that track. They're not millionaires, Speaker. They're not "millionaire breeders," like Dwight Duncan would have called them. They're real people who—

Mr. Jim McDonell: Just trying to make a living.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —are trying to make a living.

Can I just tell you who they are? Because they're my friends. I've got Sue and Gary McDonald, two of the finest people I'll ever meet. He came here from Newfoundland to make a better life. I really respect that because I came from Nova Scotia because Ontario was the place that was going to give me that better life, and it has. This is a great province. Gary came up here, and he made a life for himself. In fact, he actually employed other people. That's kind of what we want when people come from other parts of the world to this province. We want them to be job creators, to help their neighbours. Gary had to let people go last year.

His wife, Sue, works at the racetrack for the horsemen. She is probably the biggest community advocate I've ever met. Sue McDonald—Sue, if you're watching at home, I love you. I'm going to give it my all—one last shot. She collected 30,000 signatures, Speaker, on petitions to go to Grant Crack, to Madeleine Meilleur and to many others, and poor old Sue; she thinks maybe they'll listen. Maybe they'll listen. Then I watch Grant Crack stand up there and totally ignore the hundreds of people, thousands probably, from his constituency who are demanding a return to the Slots at Racetracks Program or something similar to it, which is what my party is proposing. That is why I will support the New Democrats.

I'm sorry that I'm emotional, but I must tell you, when that spiteful little man, Dwight Duncan, decided to cancel the Slots at Racetracks Program, I could not even speak

to Dalton McGuinty at the time when I was at the airport with him. I thought, how hateful, how spiteful, how nasty a policy can you get when your main goal in life is to destroy good, hard-working, tax-paying, law-abiding citizens in rural Ontario? That is how upset I am at this policy.

Let me tell you about some other people I know. Wyatt McWilliams is probably one of the best farmers in this country, because he started Hay West. Wyatt has a farm, also in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, and he supplements his income by selling his hay. I've been out many times to his farm in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, and I think he should have that same right as an entrepreneur who is also a farmer, who builds our cities, because he is part of a great, great rural Ontario. Not only do they help build them; they help feed them. If we're able to help them sustain their livelihood because we have a great, world-class racing system here in Ontario, then we should actually encourage that.

1630

What I resent is for the members opposite to stand in their place and tell us it was a subsidy, take the subsidy away when it was really a revenue-sharing arrangement, and then send back a subsidy in the form of a welfare payment. It's not sustainable, it is not fair and it is not right.

Whenever I travel across Canada, as I have with my colleague from Huron–Bruce, as well as my colleague from Hamilton—at the moment she's not in her seat. We were able to go to Edmonton, and we saw a world-class facility that was modeled, if you can believe it, on what we've done here in Ontario. If you go out through the southern United States and the Midwestern United States, the people throughout North America are looking at our system. They're modeling it off this system, and this Liberal government decided that they were going to destroy it.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Do you have to yell?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I say to the member opposite, if you have a problem, leave. I am speaking on behalf of my 130,000 constituents, some of whom are losing their jobs because of your government's policies. If I am excited and I'm passionate about this, I would rather take that back to my community than the complacency that I just saw from the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

I first brought this to the floor of the assembly on August 30, 2012, when I asked for the auditor to review the cancellation of the Slots at Racetracks Program and the government's modernization program. I've spoken on numerous occasions, whether it was on Mr. McNaughton's private member's legislation or the member from Essex's legislation. I've always stood here in my place to defend this program. Even previous to that, myself and my colleague Tim Hudak, who is our leader, have spoken time and time again—Mr. Tropea will account for that, as will Mr. Whelan, from the Ontario Harness Horse Association—about the importance of the Slots at Racetracks Program.

I have long-standing support of that community and that sector. It is one that has, I think, defined what is good about Ontario. There were problems with it—no question. That's why we're all trying to seek solutions. I was proud when there was all-party support for my motion. I was proud that I was able to work with colleagues in another political party to ensure that the Auditor General is going to review the modernization plan. And I'm proud to stand here today.

I guess I could talk a little bit about how we got here, but I'm not really in the mood. I'm not really in the mood to pick on the NDP today. I'm not really in the mood to look at their motion and where they tried to, I think, be a bit devious about the wording with respect to my party.

At the end of the day, I'm here with my colleague Randy Pettapiece, who is our critic. I'm here with my other colleagues who know these people, who understand the economic benefits of the \$1 billion that they have created in terms of an industry in revenues, how they've helped subsidize our health care and our education system, and the jobs that they have created in small-town and rural Ontario.

If that's too hard for the member from Pickering to understand—I can't apologize, Speaker. I know of what I speak, and I know of what my colleagues speak.

But I'll continue to stand here and I'll continue to defend the people I represent. I'll continue to support Jamie Copley. I'll continue to support Ted McDonald. I'll continue to support Chuck Ibey. I'll make sure that every day I stand in this assembly, I remember who sent me. I'll continue, whenever this issue is raised, to talk about how we can restore a viable horse racing community in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, on this I will close: In the last two years, my constituents have had to euthanize their horses. They have either faced bankruptcy or had to move. Or they have had to make a very difficult decision on whether or not they can feed their families, pay their mortgage, send their kids to school, or keep horse racing. Those are the real decisions that the people I represent had to make as a result of this hateful, spiteful decision. I'll stand here today and I'll support it. And I'll stand here whenever there is going to be a motion on horse racing, to defend my constituents. Speaker, that's why I was sent here, and that's what I'll continue to do. If that's uncomfortable for the member opposite, well, guess what? She'd better get used to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It is, as always, an enormous privilege to rise today in the House, and particularly on this issue. I am pleased that our leader, Andrea Horwath, has dedicated our opposition day motion to once again, I believe for the third time this year, attempt to entice, attempt to educate, inform the government about how, in fact, wrong-headed the decision to cancel the Slots at Racetracks Program was, and how detrimental it has been to rural Ontario.

Before I get into my remarks, Speaker, I'd like to recognize two gentlemen who are here, who have been here for every debate around this issue and many more—*Interjections.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, we listened less intently at the last speaker, and we have five sidebars, as usual, coming from the same area. If you want to talk about it, go outside.

Continue.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Speaker. As I was saying, I want to introduce and welcome two guests who are here: Brian Tropea and Ken Hardy from the Ontario Harness Horse Association. They've provided steadfast leadership and a voice. They've travelled across rural Ontario, meeting with their members, meeting with concerned citizens, with political leaders from all levels. Man, you guys have put some miles on your vehicles, and I know it has been a strain emotionally, financially. I can't imagine the battle. But here we are again.

Speaker, when I first had the privilege of addressing the issue and learning about the issue, in all honesty I was really not familiar with horse racing in the province of Ontario, although we had a historic racetrack in Windsor. In fact, I'm actually allergic to horses. Brian can attest to that. As soon as I get around them, I break out; I can't breathe. I'm allergic to cats, as well. Nevertheless, I have learned about how wonderful and special and important this industry is. I've learned about the connection between the families—and they really are families. It's an entire family in Ontario that operates and runs and promotes this wonderful industry. I've learned about its economic impact on regions, certainly my own in Windsor and Essex county. And I've learned about how devastating, ultimately, this decision was.

For those who are tuning in at home today, I simply want you to know that I don't believe the government intended this as a malicious decision. This was simply a financial decision. This is based on some really hard, fast metrics of privatization.

We've talked about the cancellation of SARP. We've talked about the mechanics of SARP. We've talked about accountability and transparency, of privatization versus public ownership, of revenue streams. What has happened here is, that historic industry that we know was profitable, that we know benefited communities, that brought in \$1.2 billion in revenue a year, that generated thousands of jobs and tens of thousands of other spinoff jobs—that was identified as competition by private casinos. When the doors were flung open to privatization in this province by Dwight Duncan, by Dalton McGuinty and by Paul Godfrey, who was, at the time, the head of the OLG, they used the Slots at Racetracks Program and the value that horse racing represents as a measure of enticement for big, private casinos to come in. We saw their plans: 29 casinos spread across Ontario, in neighbourhoods that didn't want them, that don't need them, that see them as actually a detriment to their community and to their regional economic development. But lo and behold, they forged on to try to entice. One of their biggest promoters was indeed the current mayor of To-

ronto, Rob Ford, who wanted to see a mega casino in downtown Toronto—a big, private casino. We saw that as one of the most detrimental—and, of course, actually, the rationale behind them cancelling SARP.

1640

The problems that were built into SARP in terms of its accountability measures and its transparency are all well documented. We certainly know that in Windsor, over the years, the revenue that came in on the management side or the ownership side was not used appropriately, should have been put back into promoting the Windsor Raceway, to upgrading the facility, to putting lights in the backstretch, to making sure that when the horses travelled from the barns to the track, they didn't fall in a three-foot pothole. Those are things that you would think would be quite reasonable for that money to be spent on, but, of course, those measures weren't put in.

So when they say they had to eliminate SARP, that they had to blow the entire thing up to fix some small measure of accountability, that is not true. That is false. That is not the reason. And they confused Ontarians. In fact, Mr. Speaker, at the beginning I wasn't sure. Dwight Duncan would stand and yell, and he was fierce in his resistance against this program. He said that it's either horses or health care, and he had a lot of people believing that.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Sound bites.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: A lot of sound bites. He confused the general public in Ontario when we were in a time of economic decline, a time when this province needs revenue, and many people in the province aren't associated with the horse racing industry—so he built up a lot of public pressure and a lot of confusion.

But now the truth is out: the tens of thousands of people, our neighbours and friends, who have lost their jobs, who have lost their operations, who have had to leave the jurisdiction, have had to put their animals down. We know that is a direct result of privatization, of his push to open the doors to privatization.

I appreciate the member from Nepean—Carleton. She speaks passionately every time she stands up. She spoke without notes, which I think is a commendable thing. She certainly knows the issue. But she didn't speak about her party's plan, and I am afraid of her party's plan. I am as fearful of her party's plan as I am of their party's plan, and it's one reason I'm not supportive of either one of you when it comes to horse racing. Not only am I not supportive—of course, we know that this was spearheaded by Paul Godfrey, who was the former head of the OLG.

Standardbred Canada is a website that deals with horse racing issues, and on May 17—the title of this article is “Hudak Praises Godfrey.” We know that they're quite closely associated; in fact, they're party members. I'll just read from the Standardbred Canada website:

“In the wake of the firing of Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. Chair Paul Godfrey, Ontario Progressive Conservative Leader Tim Hudak, who has criticized the

OLG's gaming modernization plan since the get-go, issued some respectful comments regarding the former OLG Chair.

"We all know Paul Godfrey. He's a man of integrity," Hudak was quoted as saying. "He's a respected public servant."

Now, he might be a man of integrity and a respected public servant, but he is also the lead cheerleader for privatization, one aspect of the OLG that is an integral component of the PC's white paper. It's their main focus when it comes to their plan on privatization.

Some folks commented on Mr. Hudak's acclamation of Mr. Godfrey. Phil Porter said, "Well, let's see ... Duncan hired Godfrey ... McGuinty endorsed Duncan's hiring of Godfrey ... Hudak supports Godfrey ... is Hudak part of Team McGuinty/Duncan/Godfrey?"

Dave Webber said, "Looks like all I have left to vote for is the Green Party. Hudak will never get my vote now."

Dave Lewis said, "I have said it all along that Tim Hudak is for the privatization of everything, and his only agenda is to become our next Premier so he can get what the Liberals have now. I lost any respect I had for him and agree with Bob Mac that he will not get a vote from me either."

Mr. Speaker, people in rural Ontario and those who are involved in the horse racing industry see through the privatization plan because it's happening to them right now. What we're proposing is what worked, and many times, often, I've heard PC members say that SARP worked. They would say, "SARP worked. We invented it." Well, why not go back to it, no strings attached? Let's bring it back. It's a program that worked. If you believed in it, you would bring it back, not any strings attached and not opening the doors to your friends and big, powerful casino lobbyists.

They promote themselves as being the purveyors of all things rural, and I think they get anxiety issues when I, particularly, start to talk about issues in rural Ontario, because I come from there. They get really anxious because they think it's their turf; they think it's their territory. But people are seeing through that. They're no longer the cowboys that they proclaim themselves to be. They are, in fact, casino cowboys, if anything, or corporate or capitalist cowboys; I don't know. But I'm not going to stand here and allow a plan that will put more nails into the coffin of the horse racing industry as quickly as the Liberals have, as the Paul Godfreys and the Dwight Duncans and the Dalton McGuintys have. I'm going to fight for a plan that actually makes sense, supports those important horse racing families in our region and starts to bring this industry back.

Today is our opposition day motion. Out of all the issues that this province faces, our leader, Andrea Horwath, saw it fit to dedicate this evening to a full debate on this issue. We've done it three times now. It shows our commitment to the issue. We've been steadfast. We have been solid and quite clear that we would

bring back—we will bring back SARP when we form the next government in the province of Ontario.

There are so many things. Leamington got together; the Lakeshore Horse Racing Association said, "No, we're not going to give up," and they put together a plan. This summer they held four races, 10 race cards, and the people in Leamington and Essex county came out in support. Their handle was the highest, if not the second highest, in the province of Ontario throughout those four weeks. It was spectacular. Our community came together to support a vital industry in rural Ontario. It shows that this industry has support. It can be viable if the government would give it a chance and stop jamming privatization down their throats. Let them survive. Let's be there to support them. This is what the motion does today. I fully endorse it and I hope all members will support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Horse racing is a crucial part of rural Ontario. It is part of the tradition that makes this province so great. Oxford is no exception, but despite this legacy, this government seems to want to kill the industry.

The horse racing industry employed—employed, not employs—60,000 men and women. That's 60,000 men and women working in an industry they loved while helping to grow their towns and rural communities. Instead of supporting this industry, the Liberal government made a decision to cancel the Slots at Racetracks Program. This program helped create revenue and build a strong industry.

But that wasn't good enough for the Liberals. The government decided to scrap the program in favour of creating 29 casinos in urban centres that don't necessarily want them. With one decision, the government put the future of Ontario's racetracks in jeopardy.

We have proposed an alternative to this decision. Included in our five-point plan to help save the horse racing industry is the reinstatement of the Slots at Racetracks Program. We also want to expand the program to include other table games and sports betting so that the horse racing industry can attract even more visitors and grow an industry.

The suggestion in the motion that we are in favour of more private casinos at the expense of casinos at racetracks is simply wrong.

One of these tracks that is being forced out is in my riding of Oxford. The Woodstock Raceway's licence was cancelled on May 19 of this year. That meant the cancellation of 16 scheduled race dates, and it has also meant that the survival of the horse racing industry in Oxford is, at best, uncertain.

It is these smaller tracks that are key to the industry. It is these small tracks that help create revenue for local farmers, groomers, veterinarians, stable owners and countless agricultural spinoffs. Without the money created from local tracks, there is a serious concern about the survival of those supporting industries.

I received a letter from a concerned Ontarian who runs a lay-up farm, a farm that specializes in rehabilitating horses from injuries. Her farm went from “a thriving small business to nothing in a month.” She continued to express concern about the future of her industry. She ended the letter by writing, “I fear the worst is yet to come.”

Large animal veterinarians are already in short supply. Those that do exist rely on horses as a major part of their client base. The London Equine Hospital relies on horses for up to 90% of the hospital's surgeries. Without a local horse industry, it will be very difficult to keep practices like this open.

1650

Another example is the Canadian Sportsman Magazine. This magazine has been in publication since 1870, 143 years in business, yet it is shutting down production in December of this year. The president of the magazine, Gary Foerster, wrote that since cancelling the Slots at Racetracks, the breeders have suffered dramatic losses: “The adverse financial circumstances visited on these breeders, and the industry at large, have been reflected in our advertising sales and subscription revenues which have plummeted to the point where, after nearly after a century and a half, this magazine is no longer economically viable.” That's another 27 people, another 27 horse-racing-related jobs, to add to the already dismal track record of this government.

It's not just the supporting business but the industry itself that needs these tracks to survive. It's these smaller tracks across the province where up-and-coming horsemen hone their skills. It's unrealistic to expect that all Canadian horses and owners can start their career at Woodbine.

Mr. Speaker, it's simple: Cancelling the Slots at Race-tracks Program is a decision that negatively affects all Ontarians. The splash may be at the tracks, but the ripples are felt everywhere. Horsemen across Ontario have tried to tell the government that this decision will destroy the industry. In response, the Premier spent money on another expensive government panel instead of taking action. When she finally decided to address the problem, the Premier attempted a short-term solution, throwing a few dollars at the problem and hoping it would go away. This solution didn't work.

However, we have put forward a five-point plan to save the jobs in the horse racing industry. We would re-establish the Slots at Racetracks Program, fix the program to make it more accountable and affordable to taxpayers, increase the types of gaming at tracks to increase revenue, and make sure the money is going where it was truly needed and where it was intended to go. That's the solution that will work.

While the NDP motion may propose some of our recommended solution, it does not go far enough to ensure the long-term success and growth of the horse racing industry. We ask the government to follow our plan and save this significant industry. As my colleagues from the PC Party have said, we will be supporting this motion, as

we do believe we need to keep working to find a solution, and it appears the government has taken the approach that where they are is good enough. I can tell you, for the people in my community, it's not good enough.

Thank you very much for allowing me to speak to this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm honoured to get up and speak about this very important issue of the cancellation of the Slots at Racetracks Program and the fact that there's no plan for Fort Erie in the government's new plan. The people in Niagara and the people in Fort Erie feel like the Liberal government has given up on them. This community has been devastated by plant closures for the last four or five years, plants like Vertis, which was around for 35 years—150 people out of work. They have been devastated by high unemployment rates.

People in Niagara feel like the boarders of Ontario and Toronto. We have unequal funding in government programs around family and children services, special-needs children in our schools, health care, community and social services, and housing. In all those portfolios, Niagara is left out in the cold when you look at the rates of people who actually need those services.

Every day, we hear from the government about all of these great jobs, the hundreds of thousands of jobs that they're creating. We hear it from the Premier. We hear it from the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. But we never hear about the job losses. We're hearing about those job losses here today, and we've been hearing about them for the last year and a half, since this was announced. It could equate to 60,000 jobs across this province.

Now, I don't know whether the government even turned their minds to what happened in Quebec when similar programs were cancelled in 2010, I believe. In Quebec, they're now trying to climb out of a horse racing industry that was devastated by the cancellation of video lottery terminals at their races. They're having difficulty doing that because they've lost a lot of their breeders—many of the breeders had to shut down their breeding operations—so they don't have the horses available. People moved out of Quebec, so they had a loss of revenue to the government. In fact, 65%, I believe, of the licences at the racetracks here in the province of Ontario are for Quebec residents. So a lot of them moved here; some of them moved to the United States. But at the end of the day, a lot of these people work in specialized jobs, and they couldn't find another job in Quebec, so they had to leave their home province and end up in other places. Some of them ended up on social assistance. It took a huge toll, actually, on social assistance in the province of Quebec. So I think the government, if they haven't, should really have a look at what happened there.

I'm kind of quoting or paraphrasing from a report that came from a guy by the name of Tony Infilise on behalf of the Quebec Jockey Club. He states, “Every day we

here in Quebec's horse racing industry live the negative consequences of past actions." He urged Ontario's decision-makers "to reconsider this flawed plan to end the Slots at Racetracks Program" which has so devastated the province of Quebec.

I'm going to spend a little bit of time talking about a local guy in my community. His name is Jim DeChellis, and he's from DeChellis stables on Netherby Road in Welland. It's right on the Welland-Fort Erie border. Jim is thoroughly disgusted with what is happening in the horse racing industry here in the province.

He said that where we used to be the model of success in Ontario, we are now struggling, and there are many jobs being lost. His is not a big stable. He had eight horses; he's now actually down to four. He has a couple of employees. He's probably going to have to lay off one of those employees.

He said Ontario used to lead, and Fort Erie was the hot spot to breed for cheap and sell-off mares to the US and Woodbine and surrounding tracks.

He said Woodbine would also send their thoroughbreds to Fort Erie and pay trainers good money to train, but that isn't going to happen if this plan continues. Now there are jobs being lost.

He told me that Americans used to come to Fort Erie. They would come to buy horses; they would come to the border tracks like Windsor and Fort Erie. They sold many horses to the US. There's a huge impact there.

He says breeding has been severely stunted due to the lack of security in the industry and the lack of races. There's no plan for Fort Erie. They're talking about a couple of festival days. How is that going to sustain any jobs or any real racing program in the town of Fort Erie?

He told me that he heard from a large breeder that he was reducing his stock of horses from 300 down to 10. That is a significant reduction.

His income is also in half now; he has lost 50% of his income already, just in one year. He says his travel costs have increased because he used to be able to actually go and race at Fort Erie, but now he has to go to Mohawk, he has to go to Woodbine or he has to go to London in order to race his horses. So he's had increased travel costs, and he's had lower purses. Those have had a huge impact on his ability to breed and to train.

He feels like the province is ignoring Niagara and focusing on tracks closer to Toronto. He says that horse breeders and front-line horse racing industry workers feel like there was a lack of consultation in the process to rework the whole industry and that by only consulting with track owners and large stakeholders, they have ignored a huge segment of the horse industry where the jobs are being lost. He says it's not helping the industry to only help the owners.

Everywhere I go in my community, whether it's a church event or a cultural event, I hear from people in my community. One had a daughter who was a single parent working at the slots at Fort Erie and raising two kids. She's now on social assistance. I hear from young people. I hear from seniors who are on their OAS, their

old age security, struggling to make ends meet. They were working part-time in the restaurant at the Fort Erie Race Track. Those people are struggling in my community, and they're having a really difficult time.

1700

Instead of spending \$2.2 million, I believe it is, paying executives at Woodbine \$28,000 bonuses, or instead of wasting \$1.1 billion on cancelling gas plants to save four or five Liberal seats, you have devastated a whole industry in this province.

Then our friends on the right talk about that we should have pulled the plug and caused an election. But, in fact, the Tories had an opportunity in this past budget and in the budget in 2012 to be at the table and to use this issue—to save the horse industry, they could have been negotiating with the government as one of their asks—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Absolutely. In a minority.

Ms. Cindy Forster: —in a minority government to ensure that this survived. But they chose to do what they always do: nothing. Nothing.

The government has an opportunity here. The plan is not in place yet. So I urge the government to take the time to read what happened in Quebec, because it's a very interesting report, and to make sure that these jobs, these 60,000 jobs in the province of Ontario, are protected, because we don't want to be here next year talking about what we could have done to try and help this industry survive in this province.

I thank our friends from the horse industry for being here today and, Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to be able to speak to this important issue. I also want to thank our leader, Andrea Horwath, for bringing forth this important motion on our opposition day. I hope that the government is listening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I join the debate today feeling somewhat conflicted because, Speaker, as you know, this morning the third party was slamming the Liberal government for not implementing budget measures fast enough. Lo and behold, here we are this afternoon, and we have the third party once again slamming the Liberal government, but this time they're slamming them for a budget measure that the third party actually enabled. It's absolutely ridiculous, what's going on here.

Do you know, it makes me reflect on what happened last week. It's an honour to serve my riding of Huron-Bruce, and I take it very seriously. I'm coming to this House day in and day out to stand up for what I know is important for the constituents of my riding—stand up. I would never, ever once choose to purposely choose to sit on my hands and play games with the livelihood of people that matter throughout rural Ontario. No one, no matter what they say or how loud they talk, can deny the fact that by voting and supporting the 2012 budget, the NDP enabled the Liberal government to kill the horse racing industry in Ontario as we knew it.

And do you know what's pretty rich? I was just speaking to my colleague the member from Oxford, and

he said, sadly, "The races are gone in Woodstock, but those slots are doing pretty darn well." It's just so rich with how this government and their enablers are manipulating and driving our economy downwards in so many different sectors.

I should take a moment and reflect on the raceway in my riding, Clinton Raceway. It has been on a funding rollercoaster for the last two years, and this rollercoaster has been fuelled by the Liberal Party as well as the third party. After the initial cancellation of the Slots at Race-tracks Program—again, as I said, the member from Oxford just said that the slots are still doing really well at his track, but unfortunately the horses are gone. But after the initial cancellation of the slots, the future of the Clinton Raceway seemed very bleak. As an organization, they were simply unsure how long they were going to last. But the Clinton Raceway was one of the lucky ones. They managed to secure funding to hold 15 races next year, which is down from 20, but as we have heard today, many other tracks across the province and in other communities that relied on this type of venue have not been so lucky. There's a feeling at the Clinton racetrack that what they managed to get is better than nothing. Never mind the fewer race days that lead to less work and less positive ripple effect to its tradespeople. Never mind that the funding only lasts for a few years. The statement we heard is that it's better than nothing. Isn't that sad, Speaker? What was once a prominent thriving industry holds their cap in their hand.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: World-class.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It was a world-class industry, as my colleague mentioned, and here they are, cap in hand, accepting fewer and fewer race days because it's better than nothing. It just shows how this Liberal government is shoving Ontario's industries down the hill, racing to the bottom.

I am so frustrated that blind eyes and deaf ears are just turned to rural Ontario and the rest of this province when it comes to the economies and the sectors that drive—and we're in a pretty sorry state of affairs here. Specifically, with regard to the horse racing industry, I was visiting with our friends over in the members' gallery just moments ago, and they're afraid that any effort at this stage of the game could be too late.

You know, it's interesting. When I was in eastern Ontario this past summer, I was in Kingston, and I was looking at some new small businesses that were opening up in Kingston. There was a wonderful company that I really enjoyed—I must go back and visit—and I asked what got them into the small business that they had entered into. I was shocked when the gentleman said that he was a horse veterinarian and his business had dropped right off. To keep things going and to try to look ahead, to have a bright future, he thought he had better diversify and enter a totally different line of business. How sad.

As I said before, the Liberal government is shoving all economies, all sectors, down a steep hill, and we're never going to recover from it, and—

Interjection: The NDP helped.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: The NDP helped, absolutely.

The NDP has put forward a motion to reinstate the slots at racetracks, slots that we know haven't even stopped yet. They think there's going to be some type of revenue-sharing program dropped from the sky. Well, it's our party, under the leadership of Tim Hudak, it's the PC Party of Ontario that has a five-point plan in ink, out on the books, encouraged by the industry that we are trying to help. What does the NDP have in terms of a solid plan to carry this industry forward?

Interjection: Where's the NDP plan?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I think they don't have one yet. All they know is how to sit on their hands and blame other people and prop up terrible, terrible initiatives that, again, drive our economy downwards.

I'm hearing that there is a plan, the motion is a plan, but it's not clear—the funding partnership that the horse racing industries and thousands of hard-working Ontarians deserve. It is not a strategy to stop job losses in the industry, nor is this motion a plan to provide the horse racing industry and the vibrant Ontario communities that depend upon it with a plan that will return this industry to growth.

All it is, Mr. Speaker, is a proposal to undo what the NDP helped to do in the first place. This is unacceptable, and only the PC Party can do better for this industry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I wanted to add my voice to this debate. In the racetrack in Sudbury Downs, this decision has meant that 42 farmers in my riding don't know if they are going to be farming next summer. It has a devastating impact on an industry that can barely survive in the north. We need this program to come back.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I am quite pleased this afternoon to get a few words on the record regarding the future of horse racing in the province of Ontario.

1710

I've always had a great interest in the horse racing industry in the province of Ontario, particularly in my local area at Kawartha Downs. I can say that I have never spent a nickel at a casino in the province of Ontario, but I have bet on Yankee Nick in the sixth, I must confess. I've been to the races on numerous occasions and have wagered a few dollars on a wide variety of horses, some successful and some not successful. It's an interesting situation.

On June 12, 2012, I went out to Kawartha Downs. I was on the back stretch of Kawartha Downs. I hauled buckets of oats and water and hauled around horse blankets. I met with every driver who was available that evening. I met with every owner who was available that evening. I met with every trainer who was available that evening and every groom who was available that evening to have

a discussion about horse racing in the province of Ontario.

It is no secret, because I'm on the record here at Queen's Park and in the media in Peterborough. I was critical of the then decision to cancel the SARP program without having another program in place to replace it. That's the record. People know that record, and I'm proud to stand by that record.

The opposition, in their motion, are advocating a return to the Slots at Racetracks Program, or SARP, which I've always believed was bad public policy. But don't take my word for it; take the word of a former Conservative cabinet minister in the province of Ontario, none other than the Honourable John Snobelen. Mr. Snobelen was a close friend of the member from Durham, a close friend of the member from Oxford, a close friend of most of them on that side of the House. Now it looks like they're back to their old tricks, throwing Mr. Snobelen right under the bus.

But I'm going to defend John Snobelen today, along with Elmer Buchanan. Elmer lives in my riding, just north of Havelock, where he has an alpaca farm. Elmer's a great guy. We always refer to him as Mr. NDP because he's a strong advocate for the party and its principles and goals. To be fair to Elmer, he was recognized as one of the great ministers of agriculture in the province of Ontario from 1990 to 1995 a very close friend of the member from Trinity-Spadina and a very close friend of the member from James Bay. They were colleagues together in that NDP government. You know what happened to him? Elmer went to a committee not too long ago. It was very sad to see that they threw Elmer Buchanan under the bus. So it's quite a sad day.

Of course, the third member of that great trinity: the Honourable John Wilkinson, former member from Perth-Wellington. The three of them together were appointed by the former ag minister, the Honourable Ted McMeekin, to chart a new course for racing in the province of Ontario.

Do you know what John Snobelen said? He said, "I've looked back. I was in the cabinet. I made that decision, and I've concluded that it wasn't the right decision." In fact, he has said in many articles that the Slots at Race-tracks Program lacked accountability and transparency—and that it was needed to bring in something new. He said that the taxpayers were not getting value for their money and that's why it needed to end. In John Snobelen's view, it was bad public policy. That's why—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There go the Tories.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Well, and Elmer Buchanan, that great NDP member, was part of that too—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The leader of the third party and the member from Essex are rather loud. Please keep it down. Thank you.

Continue.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Now the cat is finally out of the bag. They didn't approve Mr. Buchanan's appointment because they wanted to get revenge. What an awful way to

have public policy in the province of Ontario. You deny somebody a two-year appointment to be chairman of the Ontario Racing Commission because somebody wanted to get political revenge—nice way of doing business here.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's the least we can do. It's our way of saying thanks.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Well, that's interesting. We'll make sure the NDP membership hears that line from the member from Essex. I'd be very pleased to spread that word around in rural Ontario, where Elmer Buchanan enjoys an outstanding reputation as a man of integrity and decency. That's Elmer Buchanan.

So we want to give thanks to the panel for their expertise and dedication. I've talked about John Snobelen, John Wilkinson and Elmer Buchanan. They provided not a five-point plan but a five-year plan to bring stability to the industry. The fact is that, after five years, we'll be able to renew that program to make sure that we bring stability to horse racing in the province of Ontario. Horse racing has a great tradition.

But you know what's kind of sad, too, Mr. Speaker? It happened to be in the Oshawa area on Sunday. My daughter was playing tennis at the bubble at Durham College. I drove by what used to be Windfields Farm. Well before the slots program was ever cancelled—all the Windfields Farm properties, as the member from Durham knows, have all been sold off for residential development. What a sad legacy of Northern Dancer, that it was all sold off for residential development, a sad day indeed for that great history with Northern Dancer and E.P. Taylor, with horse racing in the province of Ontario.

Our plan builds a solid foundation and a new partnership for horse racing in the province of Ontario. It provides an opportunity for horse racing in Ontario to grow and prosper. The plan we put forward, I'm proud to say, provides accountability, transparency and a positive return on investment of public funds. Mr. Speaker, it encourages the industry to be responsible for its own future success by enhancing the fan base and increasing the opportunity for wagering. It's a partnership program. That's why we are putting \$400 million in a five-year plan: to stabilize the industry, to provide the opportunity that supports opportunities for growth and to make sure we continue with a very proud heritage in rural Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, from my perspective, it doesn't matter whether you bet \$5 on Yankee Nick in the sixth, whether you go to a blackjack table or you put money in a slot machine: Gaming is gaming is gaming. So I'm pleased that the Premier made a landmark decision to reintegrate horse racing with the broader gaming activity in the province of Ontario.

This funding will support live racing and other industry-wide initiatives such as the Horse Improvement Program, responsible gaming—very important—and marketing and branding of horse racing in Ontario. The Horse Racing Partnership Plan will promote and strengthen live racing in the province of Ontario. It will

provide all three sectors of the industry—racetrack operators, owners and breeders—with the potential to be very profitable.

Rural and northern communities will continue to see significant economic benefits from both live racing and the industries that support horse racing, including breeding, training, veterinarians and the other support services.

I want to emphasize, whether it's Sudbury Downs or Kawartha Downs or Rideau Carleton, that all tracks in all parts of Ontario, including Fort Erie, will have the opportunity to continue to provide live racing. Individual racetracks will make their own business decisions, and we're prepared to assist to make that happen, in how they can participate effectively in the new plan.

For all those track operators that I know are listening to this great debate today, we want to work with them and Elmer Buchanan at the Ontario Racing Commission, and they should be submitting their sustainable business plans as we speak. We are committed to working with the tracks so they can develop sustainable, customer-focused business cases and have new sources of revenue, new ideas and new business partnerships. Our government has been working toward an accountable and transparent horse racing industry going forward. That's important to every taxpayer in the province of Ontario.

There are others, Mr. Speaker—whether their plan is a five-point plan or a three-point plan or a half-baked plan, it's still that at the starting gate, and our plan is galloping forward for the horse racing industry in Ontario.

We want to make sure that we don't reinstate a program that was unaccountable and lacked transparency. That's what John Snobelen said, and he was one of the architects of the plan when he was a distinguished cabinet minister from 1995 to 2003. We want to make sure that, when we invest public dollars, there is accountability and transparency.

So, Mr. Speaker, you can conclude pretty quickly that I'm not going to be supporting this motion. This is not how we create a successful world-class horse racing industry in the province of Ontario. We must move forward, and that's exactly what we've done with the Horse Racing Partnership Plan. Our plan links the future of horse racing to a renewed focus on horse racing customers and provides great opportunities for growth for the future. We have a positive plan in place. We're going to move forward with one of the great rural industries in the province of Ontario.

1720

Mr. Speaker, I'm very supportive of the plan we put forward. It's a plan that has resonance with rural Ontario. We've got a lot of accolades for moving this program forward, and we look forward to the racing season in 2014.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very proud to rise on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. I would say, as the member from Peterborough said, that the area of

Durham is one of the central areas for the equine industry in Ontario, starting with the noble history back at Windfields Farm and Northern Dancer—and I'd say continues to this day. I would only say that the owner of the world champion standardbred horse is Glenn Van Camp from my riding—as well as probably the best, highest-quality breeding operation, which is Tara Hills. I would say that the Heffering family is a highly regarded family in my riding and certainly in the horse business across Ontario.

Let's put this thing in perspective and be honest about this with people. If they were going to have a special select committee, they should have had that first, not after the plane crash. They just took it and blew it up, and that's the unfortunate truth. They took the lives and prosperity and opportunity from many families, hard-working families, and I would say in my riding of Durham the travesty and the list is long.

I have a list of the families that have been affected in my riding. I do want to put them on the record: Stuart Cochrane, as well as—as I said—the Heffering family; Barb Graham—a family that's completely dedicated their lives to it; Rik Hudson; Dean Link is another person, although they're actually in the quarter horse industry; Evelyn Page, a supplier to the industry; Charlie Reid has written many, many noble stories about his five generations of breeding and racing horses from their farm in Orono, Ontario; as well as Clint Treen and others who have told me that their livelihood has virtually been destroyed without any consultation.

How regrettable for a government, especially this government, to play the politics that have been well described by my colleagues here today. Just recently, I was told that at the premier select sales just held last week, there were 125 horses sold. The usual price is \$20,000 to \$30,000; the new price is \$12,000 to \$20,000. These are families that have lost \$7,000 to \$10,000 per horse. That's on the board. This is what they've done, and that's the beginning of the end.

I would say that, as my colleague from Oxford has mentioned, the only classic paper in the area—that business is put out of business. Mating and breeding this year is down 57%. This is from the top people in the industry that watch the direction it's heading in. It's down.

Changes in support by the NDP and the Liberal government—this is just unacceptable. The industry is unsustainable because of the conditions of uncertainty that they have created. Who wants to invest in an industry that's been told to close the doors?

The \$400 million over five years is actually a take-away from the industry of \$1.3 billion. That's the true fact of the numbers here. They have stolen from the very pockets of these 9,000 farms and families, from the industry; they've stolen \$1.3 billion. Let's be telling the truth about this. This is a deal between the NDP and the Liberal government.

I can't for one moment think the people of Ontario haven't caught on to a government that's so hungry for

every single dollar they can take out of rural Ontario. It's completely unacceptable.

Another good example of things that they should look at is the sires stakes races. The purses used to be around \$18,000; now they're cut in half. They're \$9,000. What are you going to get? You're going to get the lower end of the industry, so they're slowly shutting it down, starving it to death. A \$400-million plan is not enough for race days, not enough for purse days and not enough for farmers in Ontario and this industry to survive and create jobs and opportunity. Small-income operations are simply going to be starved to death.

Ontario horses used to be the top breed. More recently, at the sales in Harrisburg, horses sold in the past for \$30,000 to \$40,000 and more per horse; now they're \$20,000 to \$25,000. There's another example of our horses being brought down.

There are no new stallions coming to Ontario, so the industry is being slowly starved to death and shut down. This is from people who have made their livelihoods and professional businesses within this area that have made it strong and respected across Ontario.

Small tracks like the ones that feed into my riding—Kawartha Downs: They've been decimated. The member from the city of Kawartha Lakes will be telling a true story about this. I think of Rideau raceway; I think of Fort Erie.

This is nothing but a cruel game and a guise against hard-working rural families in the horse racing equine industry. It's shameful, and I'm disappointed by the NDP not telling it the way it is. They could have saved this industry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm glad to join the debate on the third party's motion this afternoon that's trying to save the horse racing industry, which they participated with the Liberals in destroying.

As the member from Durham has just stated, Kawartha Downs, of course, is in my riding of Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock but very close to the member from Durham and the member from Northumberland and the minister who is not in the chamber—oh, here he comes back—right across the street from the Peterborough riding of the minister, a major source of employment and entertainment, for sure.

In less than two years, since this all started in 2012, the horse racing industry has been turned on its head at Kawartha Downs and Peterborough, like most other tracks. It's affected the trainers, the groomers, the feed stores, the suppliers, the hay growers, the trailer salespeople; it has affected everything.

They had 100 races a year at Kawartha Downs; it's now down to 20. That's an 80% decrease. How does an industry get by on that? How does an industry survive? They say that they're going to have a quick fix to give maybe 10%, if we'll see any of that, to the 10 smaller regional tracks. That's not going to save an industry. Let's be real here. Kawartha Downs has been a staple in our community for years. Hiawatha Horse Park in Sarnia

was down to 20 races this year, and the Fort Erie track has been told about a festival plan. Can you believe that they have a festival plan? Maybe on a long weekend you're going to get a race there, and they think that's going to save the racing industry.

They didn't ask the operators. They didn't consult. We've heard from all the people affected by the sudden change, the "pull the legs out from underneath them" changes to the Slots at Racetracks Program that have devastated the industry.

Stability is not what the Liberal government is offering our province's breeders and trainers. The member from Durham brought up the Forest City yearling sale held in October, pushed to last weekend, into November, so the industry could get a feel—I don't know how you could get a feel for the government horse racing plan, because it's all just garbage talk.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's changed by the day.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes. It doesn't happen. Sunday morning, the sale couldn't even begin, because there was nobody there.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Shame.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It is shameful. It was an hour late even starting up, and the prices—you can't even pay to have the horse—\$13,000. It takes \$18,000 to \$20,000 per yearling; they got \$13,000—way down.

In less than two years, the breeders have dropped from 4,000 horses to just 1,200. The barn door is closing. This government is trying to say, "Oh, we've got this panel"—yet another one of their 37 panels, I think it is. The panel to discuss the panel to discuss, while in the meantime, let me see, how many horses have maybe been euthanized? About 13,000 horses. How many people have lost their jobs? It's 9,000 so far, and thousands more to come. The government had no insight. It takes three to five years of investment in a horse to get the money out, for it to survive. You chased them out. The five-year band-aid solution: What a bunch of gobbledygook—I don't know if I can spell that—with the removal of the Slots at Racetracks Program.

I've seen devastation in my riding. Mike Wade, previously of Little Britain—I say "previously" because he had to sell his farm and move, but he was the trainer of the famous Billyjojobob, the first Canadian horse to win the Elitloppet in Sweden. As I said, he has already moved away. They can't wait.

This government intentionally starved the horse racing industry, shut them down to try to shrink them, and then, "It's not so bad. We'll just throw you a band-aid bit of money. Everything's going to be okay." The Minister of Rural Affairs just said, "Everything's going to be okay." It's not going to be okay. There were 17 tracks. They're talking about keeping eight or 10 alive, if possible.

1730

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They're going to destroy mine.

Ms. Laurie Scott: My colleague from Ottawa—they're going to destroy her track. Kawartha Downs can't live on 20 races when we used to have 100. That does not keep the people employed. It does not keep a horse industry going.

We brought forward a plan to reinstate the Slots at Racetracks Program, not the original way it was but a plan that keeps the horse industry alive. We are the only party that's providing a plan for the horse racing industry. The Liberals and the NDP killed the horse racing industry in this province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It is, as I like to say at the beginning of making remarks here in this chamber, always a pleasure, and in fact it's always a privilege for me to have the chance to add my voice to an ongoing discussion, especially around an issue that obviously evokes such passion and such energy in this chamber as this particular topic has done for the last while.

I had the chance to listen, Mr. Speaker, to some of the debate and discussion that has taken place from members opposite. It's always something that I think is very important to put the matter in context. That's why, any opportunity that I have to speak in the House, I'm delighted when, before my actual speaking itself, I've had the chance to hear from members opposite and from members of our own caucus on this side about how they feel with respect to an issue.

I want to begin by talking a little bit about the very eloquent and profound remarks made by the Minister of Rural Affairs, the member from Peterborough, someone who has, over the last number of months since taking on the portfolio, the responsibility for looking after rural affairs in the province of Ontario; someone who has done an outstanding job on behalf of all rural communities in the province; someone who has given voice to their aspirations, their hopes; and someone who works exceedingly hard to make sure that those of us in this government stay connected and stay in touch with what's taking place in rural Ontario.

I thought that he spoke very, very eloquently today about the strong moves that our government has made over the last number of weeks and months on this particular file. He also referenced the great work done by another member of our caucus, the Minister of Community and Social Services, the member from Hamilton, who I believe was the person to first appoint the panel or the committee made up of Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Snobelen and Mr. Wilkinson, who came forward with important recommendations.

I also took the opportunity to take a look at the actual motion that we're debating. It's interesting that as I listened to the members from both opposition parties speak—I'm not 100% sure, particularly members of the official opposition, that they had closely read the actual motion itself or clearly understood what we were discussing here.

It's also interesting, and I think it would be interesting for the members at home who are watching the debate this afternoon, Speaker, to understand that perhaps there's a bit of unfortunate gamesmanship that's taking place on the part of both opposition parties, trying to, both in the way that they've—

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: How dare you?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): How dare you? I'm back. The heckling will come to order, won't it?

Interjection: We thought Ted was still in the chair.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Yes. There's quite a lot of noise going on in the House right now. There are a few sidebars. I couldn't even hear the member from Vaughan. We'll take it down a notch, won't we, folks? Thank you. Very nice.

Continue.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the members opposite, particularly those sitting in the front row of the opposition benches, misunderstood what I was trying to say. It's not about the issue, which evokes and ignites such passions on the part of people from all three parties—it's not about whether the issue itself is important. We know it's important. Premier Wynne, Minister Leal and the folks on this side of the House understand the importance of this issue. That's why we've taken considerable action. We've moved forward with a very solid plan that's going to help the industry and help the province.

When I reference "gamesmanship," I think the people watching from home today would probably be, more than anything else, lamenting the fact that on such an important issue, on an issue that matters so much to so many different communities across the province, the sniping back and forth between both opposition parties is—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, I guess people didn't take me seriously; I'm going to start naming people—last warning.

Continue.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying a second ago, the sniping that has gone back and forth between both opposition parties wanting to blame each other for what they imagine is the situation that we have here today in the province of Ontario on this important issue is unfortunate.

As I was saying a second ago, when the Minister of Rural Affairs rose in his place today to speak to this, he spoke very eloquently about the moves that our government is making. I will be the first one to admit, as an individual who represents a suburban Toronto GTA riding, that there are many others on all three sides of this House that have a better understanding of the complexities of the industry and the issues that are being faced. I'll be the first one to admit that. But I think, also, whether you represent a suburban GTA riding or a rural or northern community, you understand the importance of making sure that Ontario's economy remains strong, that we continue to move forward and, from the way that we work with OLG, that we continue to generate the kind of revenues that we need as a province so that we can continue to invest in crucial areas like health care, like public services for the people of this province, like education and public infrastructure.

OLG modernization was an extremely important undertaking, not just for our government and our party, but for the people of Ontario, because OLG currently

provides close to \$2 billion annually so that the government of Ontario can continue to support vital public services—\$2 billion a year that we can use to invest in people, that we can use to invest in modern infrastructure, that we can use to make sure that we support a dynamic and innovative business climate here in the province of Ontario. That's what we're doing.

The reason to undertake the modernization was because the modernization plan itself was on track to generate almost \$1 billion in new revenue for the province by 2017-18. That's another \$1 billion over and above the \$2 billion I referenced a second ago, so that we can keep building the strongest province here in the country of Canada.

I also think Premier Wynne deserves kudos for her leadership role that she has taken with respect to understanding the importance of rural Ontario, to making sure that whether you live in a city, in a suburb or in rural or northern Ontario, you are part of one province, you are part of a province that believes in the importance of investing in our people, in our infrastructure and in that business climate that needs to be dynamic and innovative—

Interjection: We're all in this together.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: —because, as was just said, we are all in this together. The Premier has demonstrated time and time again over the last number of months, as individuals like the Minister of Rural Affairs and others have done, that we are moving in the right direction.

I know there has been some discussion—and when I look at the actual text of the motion itself, there are some references or complaints with respect to the consultation process that was undertaken as a result of the work that we wanted to do with respect to OLG modernization. But I think that it's also important to note that over the course of the last number of months, no one can doubt the importance and virtuousness of Premier Wynne and our team's determination to make sure that we are consulting and talking to the people of Ontario before we make crucial decisions.

When I think specifically of OLG modernization, it's important to note that OLG had held consultations from January to June of 2011. The purpose of these consultations was to hear stakeholder perceptions on the future of lottery and gaming in Ontario, to learn about best practices from within the province and around the world, and to identify opportunities to work with the private sector or stakeholders in new ways.

It's also important to note that OLG's strategic business review team met with more than 50 stakeholder groups from across Ontario and across a number of other jurisdictions. The team met with representatives from First Nations, casino owners, responsible gambling researchers, racetrack owners, horse people, industry leaders, operators in other jurisdictions, convenience store operators as well as related government organizations. The consistent message heard over and over again from stakeholders was that the current model of lottery- and land-based gaming in Ontario needed to change substantially in order to meet customers' needs.

After the extensive consultations that were undertaken by our government over the last number of months and beyond, we have arrived in a place where, on this particular topic, over the last number of weeks, because of the feedback that we've heard from individuals like Elmer Buchanan, John Snobelen and John Wilkinson, and because of the work of the Premier and her team, the work of the Minister of Rural Affairs and others on this side of the House—because of all of that work, we have landed in a place where we have a solid plan to move forward. We have a solid plan to move forward with OLG modernization to make sure that the extra revenue we can generate continues and can continue to be plowed into communities like my own and that, whether you're from Ottawa or from Thunder Bay or wherever you happen to be from, we can continue to invest in the communities that we represent here—

Interjection: It's what Ontarians want.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's exactly what Ontarians want. It's what I hear over and over again. Regardless of where I am in the province, that's what people want us to do.

I'm not going to talk for too much longer, but I will say that when I look at the motion itself, and I look in particular at the last line, Speaker, where there is a reference to the notion that future racetrack audits existing be published etc. to ensure future transparency—when I sat down here this afternoon and I took a closer look at this particular motion coming from the leader of third party, it was interesting from my perspective. I thought back to a number of weeks ago when there was a debate in this Legislature, in this chamber, on another bill, a private member's bill put forward by the newly elected member from Ottawa South. He put forward a bill proposing to dramatically increase transparency around MPPs' expenses. There was a wonderful, dynamic, energetic debate in the Legislature that day on that particular bill. While folks may disagree on the finer points of what a move like that may or should look like, Speaker, what struck me, when I considered the debate coming from members of the third party that day on that private member's bill relating to transparency, relating to making sure that we provide people with what they are looking for in terms of accountability, what I heard coming from members of that party that day—

Interjection: Which party?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: The NDP, the Ontario NDP. Senior members of that caucus, from the NDP, stood in their place repeatedly that particular day, when debating the private member's bill from the member of Ottawa South regarding MPPs' expenses and the transparency that's needed for those expenses—and said time after time after time that while they like to talk the talk repeatedly in this House, they have no credibility when it comes to transparency issues—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would suggest the member from Vaughan stick to the script. I think [*inaudible*].

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Well, Speaker, with the greatest of respect, I'm looking at the last line of the motion,

and there's a reference to the need for transparent processes. I don't think the people in my community or any other community watching from home today would understand how it's possible that that party, time and time again, can stand in this place and demand transparency, but on that particular day, Speaker, when they had a chance to stand up for transparency, they not only voted against it, they spoke against it, perhaps more passionately against that particular motion than I've ever seen them talk about something in this House. I think that's unfortunate.

As I said from the very outset, people on this side of the House are working hard to move the province of Ontario forward. We are going to keep moving forward with OLG modernization so that we derive the revenue needed to make sure that we can continue to invest in our people and we can continue to invest in modern infrastructure. At all costs, we will continue to make sure that we build and that we enhance and that we improve an innovative and dynamic business climate for the people of Ontario.

I'll be voting against this motion, Speaker. I call on all members in this House to join with us and do the same.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate. Further debate. Last call for further debate.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order.

Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 3. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1744 to 1754.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Members, take your seats. Order. Take your seats.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Are we all done? Thank you.

Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 3. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hatfield, Percy	Nicholls, Rick
Arnott, Ted	Hillier, Randy	O'Toole, John
Bailey, Robert	Holyday, Douglas C.	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Horwath, Andrea	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Jackson, Rod	Sattler, Peggy
Campbell, Sarah	Jones, Sylvia	Schein, Jonah
Clark, Steve	Leone, Rob	Scott, Laurie
DiNovo, Cheri	MacLaren, Jack	Singh, Jagmeet
Elliott, Christine	MacLeod, Lisa	Tabuns, Peter
Fedeli, Victor	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	Marchese, Rosario	Thompson, Lisa M.
Forster, Cindy	McDonnell, Jim	Vanthof, John
Gélinas, France	Miller, Norm	Walker, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	Milligan, Rob E.	Wilson, Jim
Harris, Michael	Natyshak, Taras	Yurek, Jeff

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All those opposed, please stand.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil
Balkissoon, Bas	Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine
Bartolucci, Rick	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milloy, John
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Fraser, John	Naqvi, Yasir
Cansfield, Donna H.	Gravelle, Michael	Oraziotti, David
Chiarelli, Bob	Hunter, Mitzie	Piruzza, Teresa
Colle, Mike	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Wong, Soo
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Zimmer, David
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 45; the nays are 38.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1757.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke–Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa–Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley–Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga–Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton–Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough–Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe–Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa–Sud	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron-Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Niagara Falls	

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Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Steven Del Duca, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
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permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
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permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Laura Albanese, Rick Bartolucci
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial
sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience
intellectuelle**

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS /
DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS**

Maitland River Elementary School
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson 4493

Firefighting
Mr. John Vanthof 4493

Ford Motor Co.
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn 4494

Girl Guides
Ms. Lisa MacLeod 4494

Health care
Mr. Michael Mantha 4494

Village Club Adult Day Centre
Ms. Soo Wong 4494

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
Mrs. Christine Elliott 4495

Community safety
Ms. Mitzie Hunter 4495

National Child Day
Mr. Bill Walker 4495

Notice of dissatisfaction
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac) 4496
Ms. Lisa MacLeod 4496

**REPORTS BY COMMITTEES /
RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS**

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly
Mr. Garfield Dunlop 4496
Report adopted 4496

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS /
DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI**

**Broader Public Sector Advertising Act, 2013, Bill
134, Mr. Bisson / Loi de 2013 sur la publicité des
organismes du secteur parapublic, projet de loi
134, M. Bisson**
First reading agreed to 4496
Mr. Gilles Bisson 4496

**Ryan's Law (Ensuring Asthma Friendly Schools),
2013, Bill 135, Mr. Yurek / Loi Ryan de 2013 pour
assurer la création d'écoles attentives à l'asthme,
projet de loi 135, M. Yurek**
First reading agreed to 4496
Mr. Jeff Yurek 4496

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS
MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES**

Addiction services
Hon. Deborah Matthews 4496
Mrs. Christine Elliott 4498
Mme France Gélinas 4498

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Carleton Place and District Memorial Hospital
Mr. Randy Hillier 4499

Environmental protection
Ms. Catherine Fife 4499

Physiotherapy services
Mr. Rob E. Milligan 4500

Small business
Ms. Soo Wong 4500

Sharks
Mr. Ernie Hardeman 4500

Children's aid societies
Ms. Cindy Forster 4500

Legal aid
Mr. Bob Delaney 4501

Charitable gaming
Mr. Todd Smith 4501

Ontario Ranger Program
Mr. Michael Mantha 4501

Distracted driving
Mr. Phil McNeely 4502

Darlington nuclear generating station
Mr. John O'Toole 4502

Air-rail link
Ms. Cheri DiNovo 4502

OPPOSITION DAY / JOUR DE L'OPPOSITION

Horse racing industry
Ms. Andrea Horwath 4503
Mr. Grant Crack 4504
Mr. Randy Pettapiece 4505
Mr. Percy Hatfield 4506
Ms. Lisa MacLeod 4507
Mr. Taras Natyshak 4508
Mr. Ernie Hardeman 4510
Ms. Cindy Forster 4511
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson 4512
Mme France Gélinas 4513
Hon. Jeff Leal 4513
Mr. John O'Toole 4515
Ms. Laurie Scott 4516
Mr. Steven Del Duca 4517
Motion agreed to 4519

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 20 November 2013 / Mercredi 20 novembre 2013

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Electronic Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2013, Bill 78, Ms. Matthews / Loi de 2013 sur la protection des renseignements personnels sur la santé figurant dans un dossier de santé électronique, projet de loi 78, Mme Matthews	
Mme France Gélinas	4473
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4480
Mr. Jack MacLaren	4480
Ms. Peggy Sattler	4481
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	4481
Mme France Gélinas	4481
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	4481

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. John O'Toole	4481
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	4481
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	4482
Mr. Steve Clark	4482
Ms. Soo Wong	4482

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Pan Am Games

Mr. Rod Jackson	4482
Hon. Michael Chan	4482

Horse racing industry

Mr. Randy Pettapiece	4483
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4483

Government accountability

Ms. Andrea Horwath	4484
Hon. Charles Sousa	4484
Hon. John Milloy	4484

Government accountability

Ms. Andrea Horwath	4485
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4485

Government's record

Mr. Todd Smith	4485
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4486

Long-term care

Mme France Gélinas	4486
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4486

Seniors

Mrs. Laura Albanese	4487
Hon. Mario Sergio	4487

Pan Am Games

Mr. Jeff Yurek	4487
Hon. Michael Chan	4487
Hon. Glen R. Murray	4488

Pan Am Games

Mr. Paul Miller	4488
Hon. Michael Chan	4488

Justice system

Ms. Mitzie Hunter	4488
Hon. John Gerretsen	4489
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	4489

Pan Am Games

Mr. Steve Clark	4489
Hon. Michael Chan	4489

Workplace safety

Ms. Catherine Fife	4490
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	4490

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	4490
Hon. Deborah Matthews	4491

Firefighting

Mr. John Yakabuski	4491
Hon. David Oraziatti	4491

Snowmobiling

Mr. Michael Mantha	4492
Hon. Glen R. Murray	4492

Forest industry

Mr. Grant Crack	4492
Hon. David Oraziatti	4492

Correction of record

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4492
------------------------------	------

Wearing of ribbons

Ms. Cindy Forster	4493
-------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Peter Tabuns	4493
------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover

